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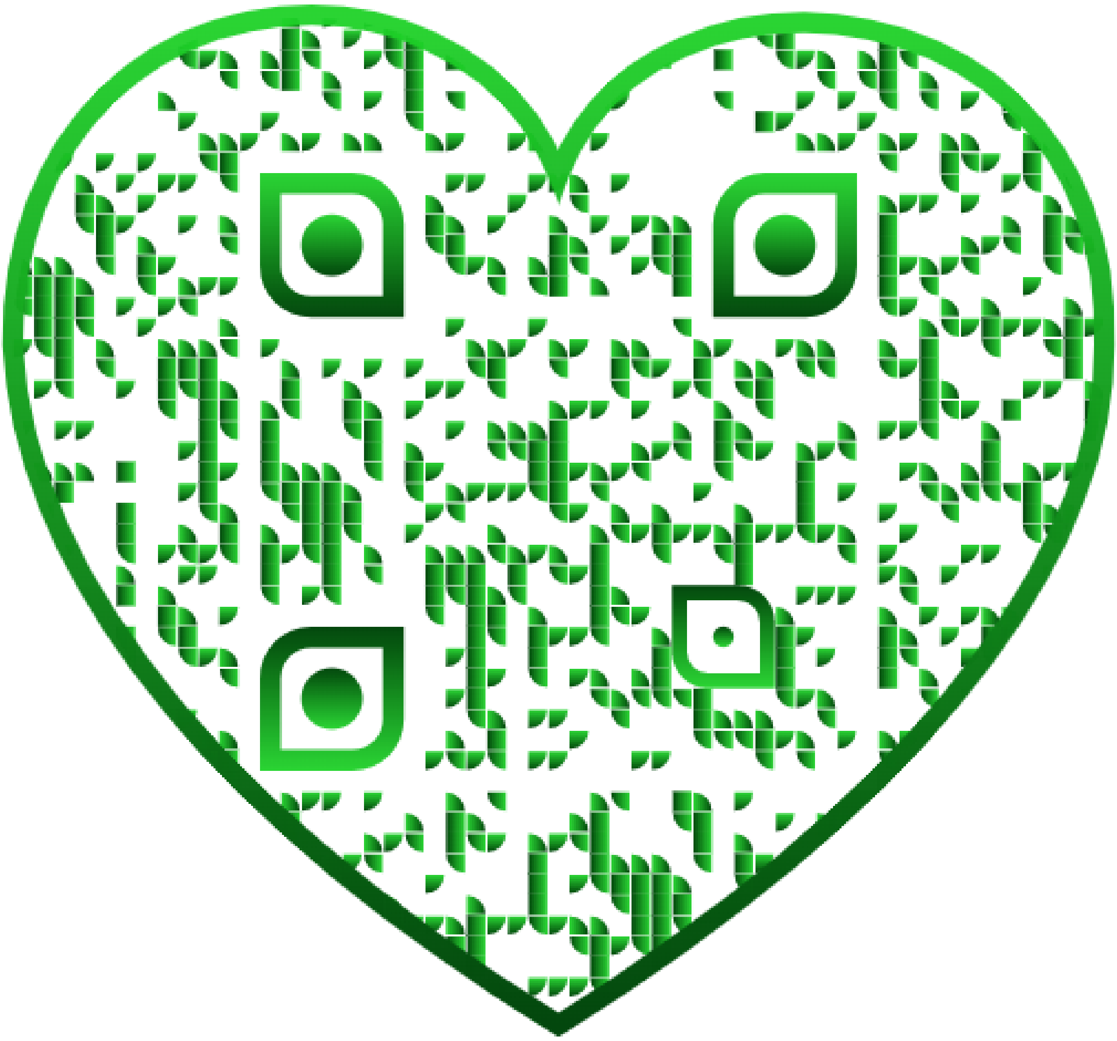

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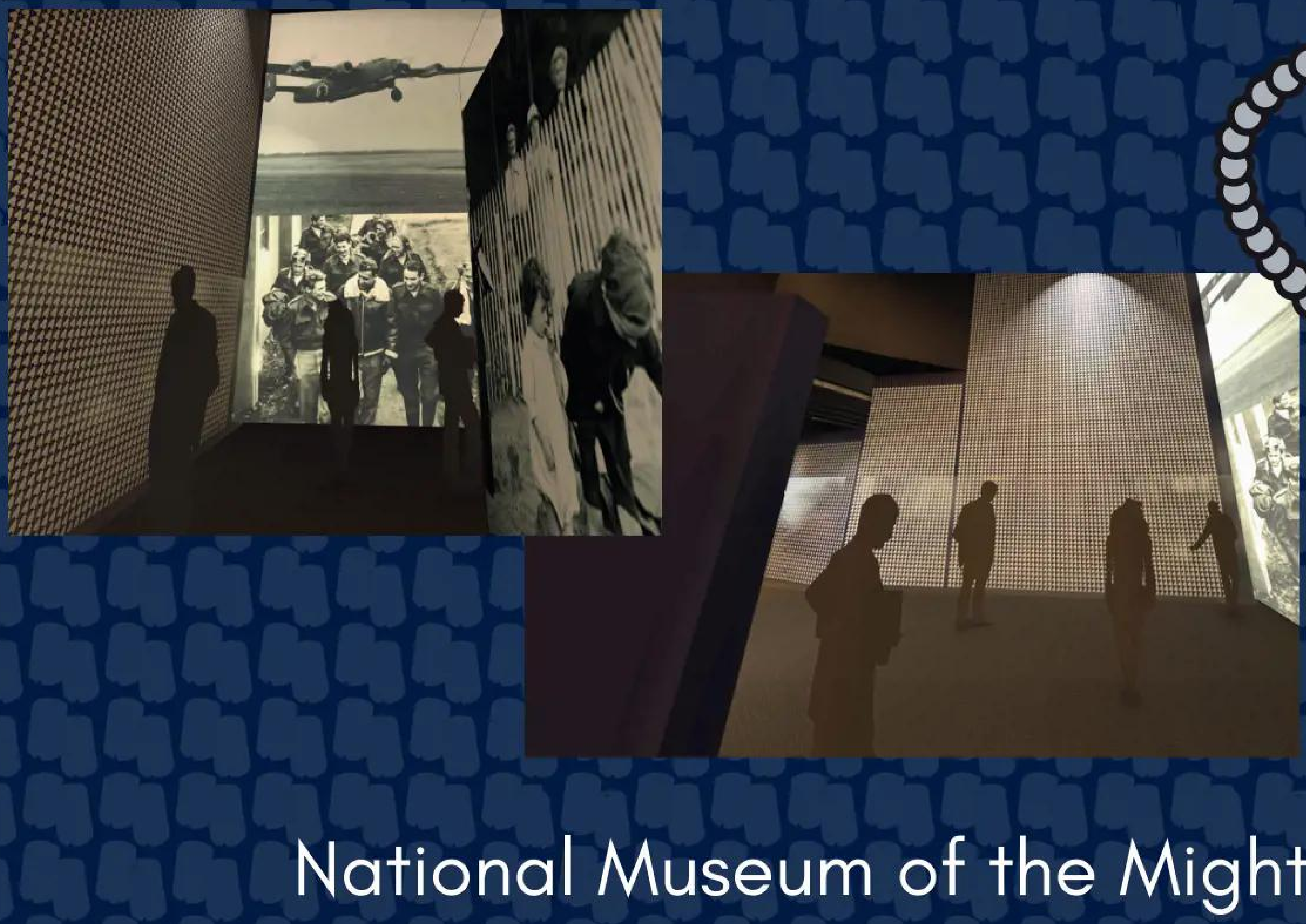

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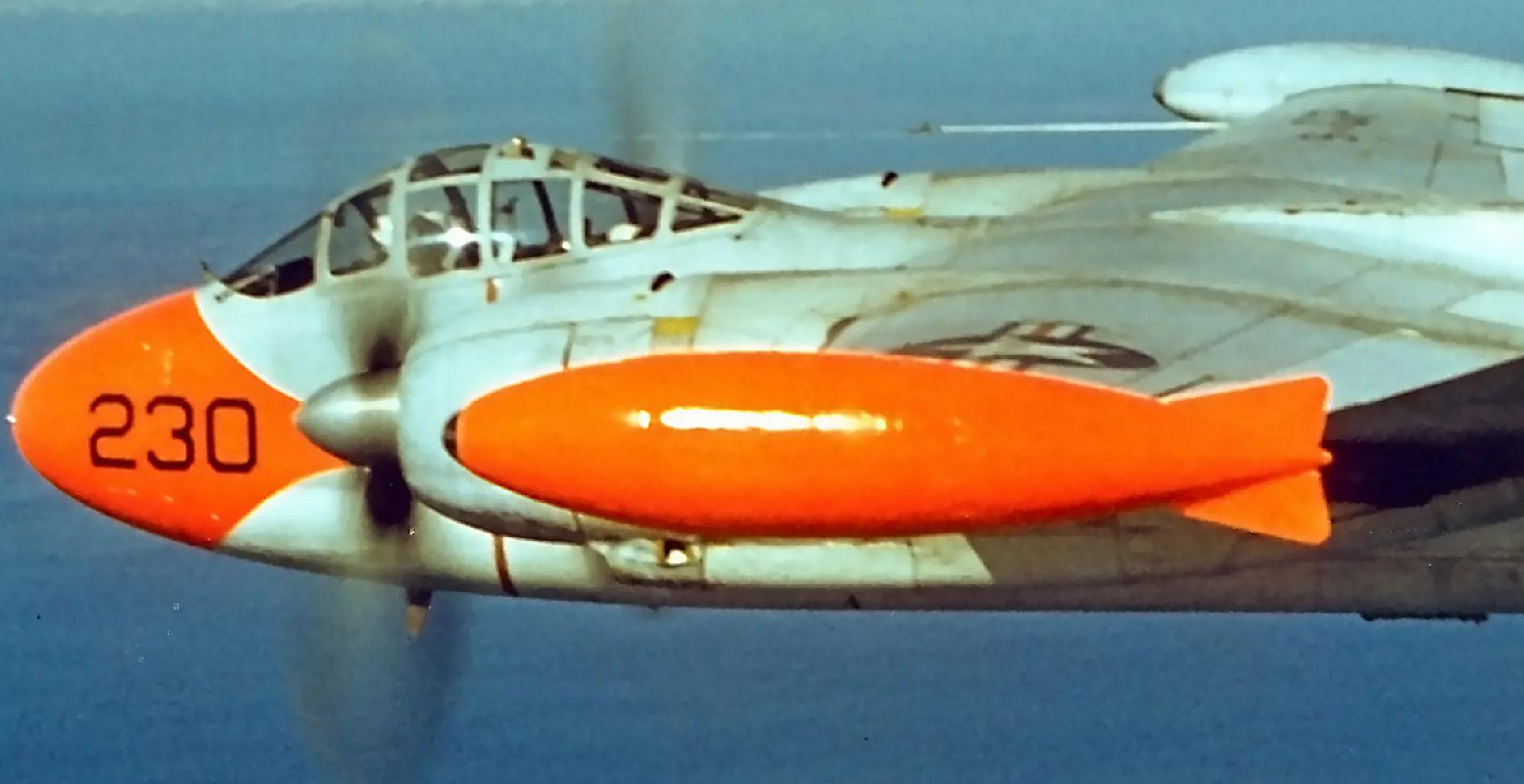

COVER: Top US Navy ace David "Dashing Dave" McCampbell in the cockpit of his Grumman F6F-5 Hellcat Minsi III. *(USN)*

THESE PAGES: Over the years, NACA/NASA had operated a wide range of aircraft for various testing duties. One of the more interesting was NASA 230, which was North American AJ-2 Savage BuNo 13409. This example of the Navy's first nuclear bomber was utilized by NASA to fly microgravity-inducing parabola flight patterns. (NASA)

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Editorial & Production Staff

Michael O'Leary • Publisher/Editor • *moleary2challenge@gmail.com*
Matt Rippetoe • Art Director
Susan Duprey • Production Manager • *ed@challengeweb,.com*
Roger Cain • Social Media Manager/Antique Aircraft Editor • *jollyrogercain@comcast.net*
Ben Marsh • Northern California Editor • *ben_marsh@sbcglobal.net*
Steve Cox • Artist in Residence • *stevecox21@hotmail.com*
Bruce Orriss • Aviation Films Editor • *bruceorriss@gmail.com*
Doug Fisher • Warbird and Classic Report Editor • *dougsfno@cogeco.ca*
Jim Larsen • Air Racing Editor • *filmandflight@yahoo.com*
Bruce Lockwood • Technical Editor • *lockwoodaviation@yahoo.com*
Philip Makanna • WWI Aviation Editor • *phil@ghosts.com*
Ralph M. Pettersen • Propliner Editor • *rmpettersen@gmail.com*
Joe Scheil • Jet Warbirds Editor • *pbydreams@aol.com*
Tim Weinschenker • Golden Pylons Editor • *pylonguy2003@yahoo.com*
Steve Whitby • Air Tanker Editor • *srwhtby@verizon.net*
Howard Carter, Keith Charlot, Jim Dunn, William T. Larkins, Gerald Liang, Norm Taylor, James Thompson, Marshall Wainwright, Mark Watt • Contributors

Editorial & Advertising Offices

AIR CLASSICS, 9800-D Topanga Canyon Blvd., Chatsworth, CA 91311
Tel: 818.700.6868 (8:00-4:00 PST Mon.-Thurs.); FAX: 818.700.6282
E-mail: *mail@challengeweb.com*
Web: *www.challengemagazines.com*

Subscription Offices

AIR CLASSICS, PO Box 16149, North Hollywood, CA 91615
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MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

I recently had the opportunity to visit a number of restoration shops across the country. All of them seemed to be quite busy but, as usual, there are always underlying problems. One of the main sticking points is the rising cost of just about anything and everything to do with historic aviation. In order to retain skilled employees, shop rates have risen. This lets the restorers compete with the many companies that are servicing the needs of the airlines and the military. The supply of highly-qualified workers is finite. Then, comes the components that are used in restorations. Several engine rebuilding shops have recently closed and this had led to some problems in the supply of radial engines.

At Sun Air, Dennis Nobile and his partners have come up with an innovative and creative plan that will guarantee a supply of freshly-overhauled motors. Dennis has built up a huge inventory of new old stock engine components and he is currently computerizing his massive inventory so that parts can be supplied on a very timely basis. "When it comes to R-985 and R-1340 radials, I can't keep them in stock," said Dennis. "Our plans include bringing new people into the engine rebuilding business — younger individuals that have a mechanical understanding that want to work of these types of motors. We are establishing a new overhaul base that will work in conjunction with several other engine shops in California to guarantee a supply of engines to the Warbird industry. By fully utilizing our comprehensive inventory, we can keep building engines for many years to come." We will be reporting on these plans in a future issue.

At Vintage V-12s, Jose Flores is onboard with this plan. "Dennis is doing a great job with the radials. At Vintage V-12s, we have been acquiring further stocks of Rolls-Royce/Packard and Allison parts so that we can keep building Merlins, Griffons, and Allisons. Currently, we have a very large inventory of parts but we are always on the lookout for more. We have a backlog of engine orders and are now doing business all over the world. The Warbird Movement has really spread and we are now supplying engines to owners in Central Europe and other countries where Warbird-type aircraft are being flown. It is an exciting time."

The availability of new technology is also aiding the restoration shops. Some components have become impossible to find but using techniques such as 3-D printing combined with original blueprints allows parts to be crafted and fitted to airframes. "There is a constant quest for more originality," said Carl Scholl. "When the Warbird Movement got going, some owners wanted gun barrels to stick in the noses of their Mitchells. All that has changed. They now want exacting replicas of the weapons themselves — .50-caliber Browning M2 machine guns with ammunition belts, containers, mounts, etc. Everything you need to add to the feeling of authenticity. Combined with that, owners also want the correct stenciling of parts and the creation of original-style placards — all the little details that add up to trophy-winning restorations. Of course, all that detailing comes at a price since it adds considerable man-hours to a project. Over the years, Aero Trader has been able to build up the world's largest inventory of B-25 parts and components but some of those parts are now in short supply and we have seen a few owners buying extra components to stockpile for future use."

We also had the recent opportunity to examine a P-51D Mustang that had been worked on during the 1970s. The aircraft has been in storage for over three decades so a lot of that 1970s' style work is still in place. The overall airframe had been stripped of all former military hardware that was not required for flight. The gun bays had been modified for carrying luggage while the ports for the six .50-caliber machine guns had been removed and replaced with smooth skinning. The cockpit and interior of the aircraft had been sprayed with light gray glossy paint while some engine components had been either chromed or polished. Overall, it was a very nice-looking machine that serves as a time capsule for the period in which it was restored. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that since the rebuild represents the time in which it was constructed. Today, such an aircraft would probably be frowned upon if it was entered in some form of airshow judging contest. To me, it is still pretty neat as it represents a time when a lot of owners came from the hot-rod world and applied some of their techniques to the surplus warplanes they were buying and flying.

The quest for authenticity can become a bit overpowering as various groups argue over the correct color of zinc chromate that was applied to wheel wells. There are lots of technical documents and manuals that call out for the specific colors and placement of markings on Warbird aircraft but we must remember that all these planes were put together and finished by fallible human beings. Plus, the work was being done to the rush schedule of wartime production. There was a war to be won and probably not a lot of thought was being given to the exact shade of zinc chromate or the absolutely accurate application of airframe markings.

Even in factory production line photographs taken during the war, you can see changes in groups of aircraft as they came down the production line. In the cockpit, one batch of planes may have had metal placards while another batch had the same style of placard made out of phenolic material — or a combination of both. In a way, this all makes the study of aviation history that more interesting as in 2026 we try to capture a particular moment in time that took place over eight decades ago.

At some point in the near future, restorations will probably have progressed to the point where we will look back at Mustangs with brightly-polished new aluminum skin of all the same tonal value. When built, the aircraft did not look that way. Examine factory photos of natural metal P-51s and it is quickly apparent as to the different types of aluminum and tonal values used for the skin. As this quest for authenticity progresses, will we see restoration shops duplicating this type of construction? Perhaps. But there is still an American fascination for "all things bright and shiny." However, if recreating the tonal values becomes the order of the day then it would not be surprising to see the blindingly-polished aluminum skins replaced with something more original. In a way, the polished skins of today are sort of like the glossy gray interiors of the 1970s.

In this issue, we have photographs that depict the start of rebuilding Rod Lewis' magnificent Douglas Havoc that was heavily damaged in an accident. This was a 100-point restoration originally done by Aero Trader to Rod's specifications. The result was a wonderful aircraft that was the sole flying example of a type that was extremely important to the Allied victory in WWII. That is another factor that we must not forget — the dedication of individual owners to put in lots of time and money to create an aircraft that is part of the fabric of our American history. There are not a lot of people willing, or capable, to go that far. In a few years, we will see the A-20 re-emerge from the restoration shop and it will probably be in even better condition than when it made its first post-restoration flight. Why? As noted, restorations are constantly changing in our search for historical accuracy and we are sure that the newest techniques will have been incorporated into the completed Havoc. It is an exciting time.

MICHAEL O'LEARY/PUBLISHER
CHALLENGE PUBLICATIONS
moleary2challenge@gmail.com

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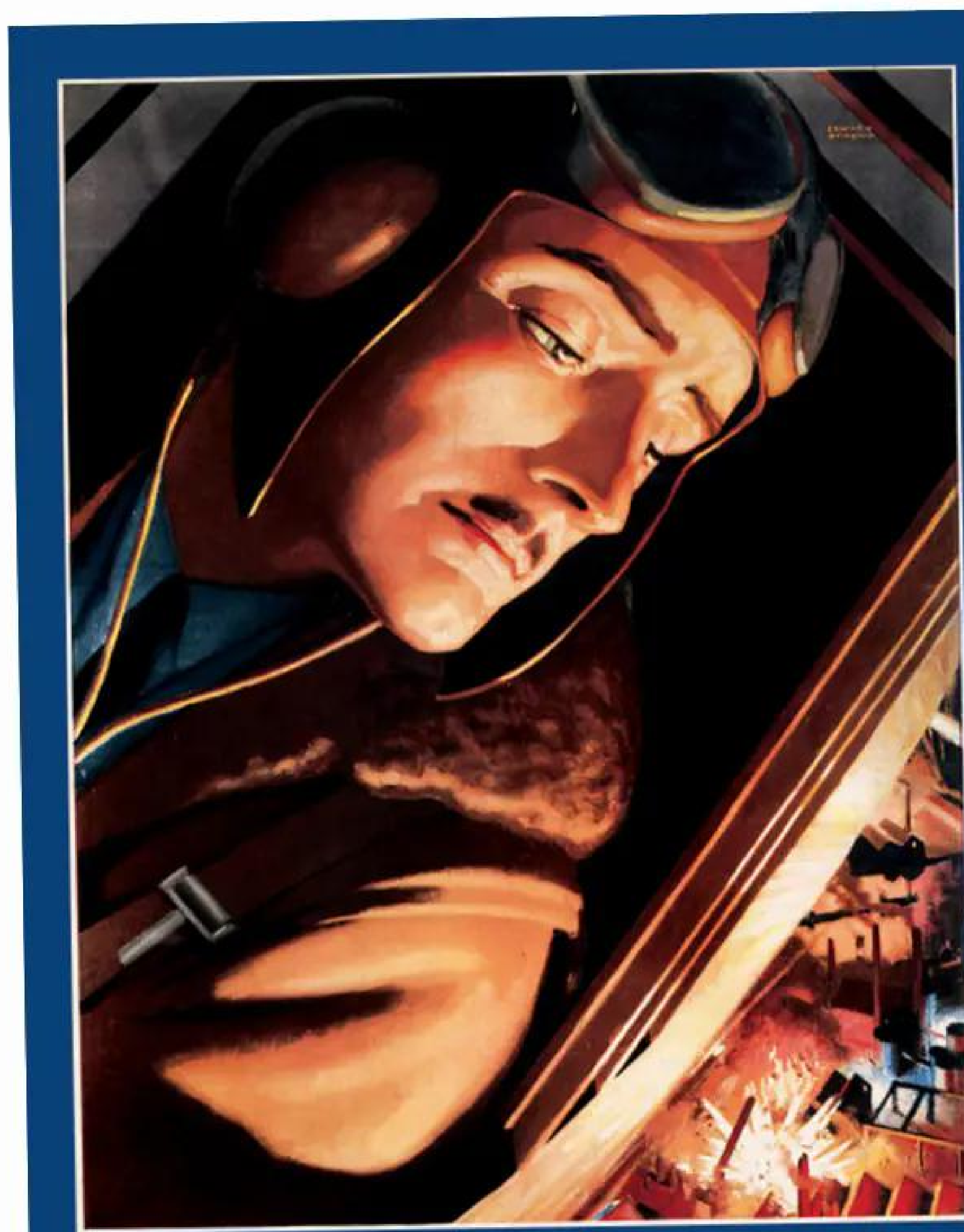
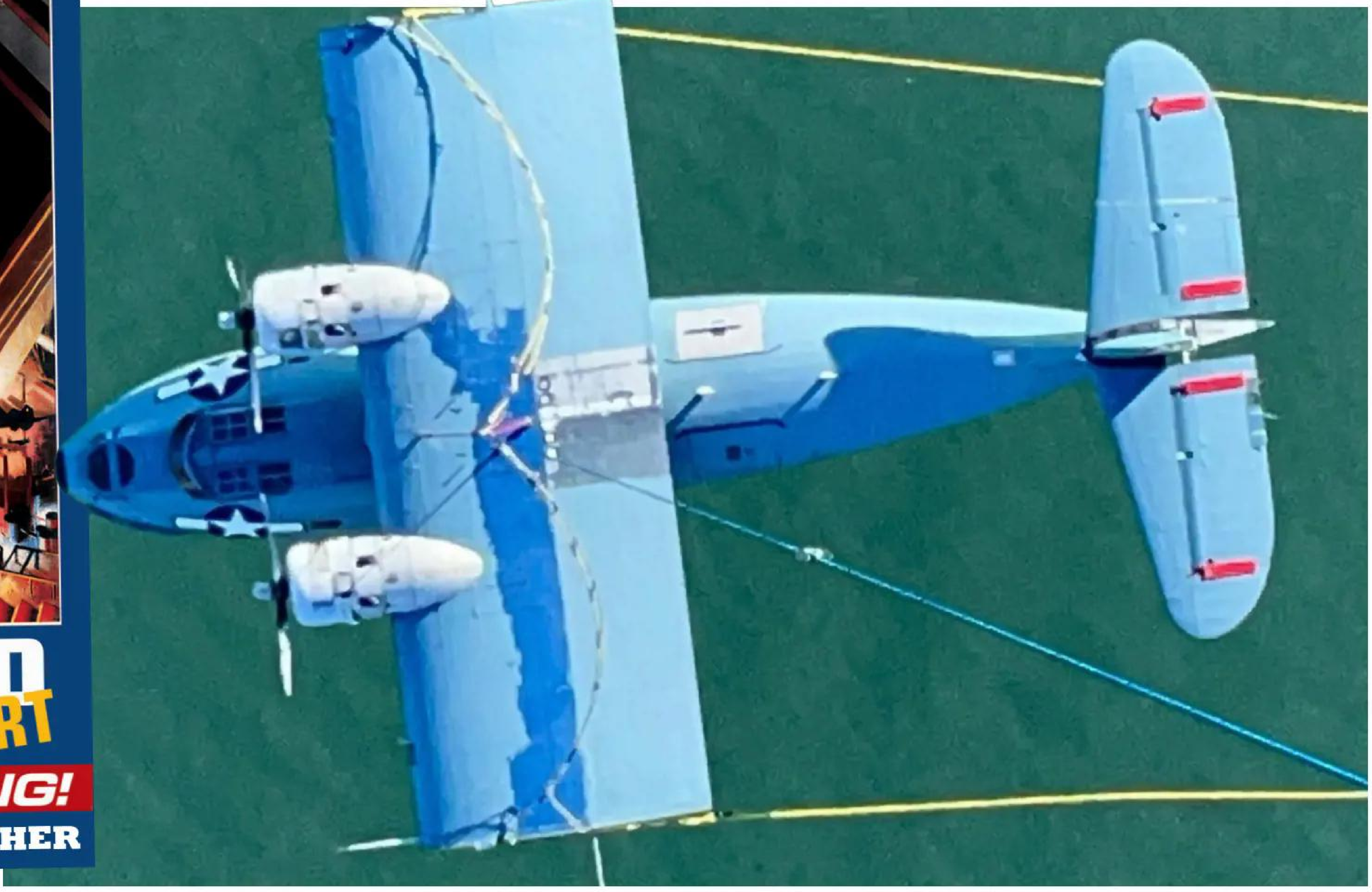


WARBIRD & CLASSIC REPORT

KEEP 'EM FLYING!

COMPILED BY DOUG FISHER



Photographed from the Chinook, the Catalina gracefully rises into the air for its last flight on 21 January 2026.

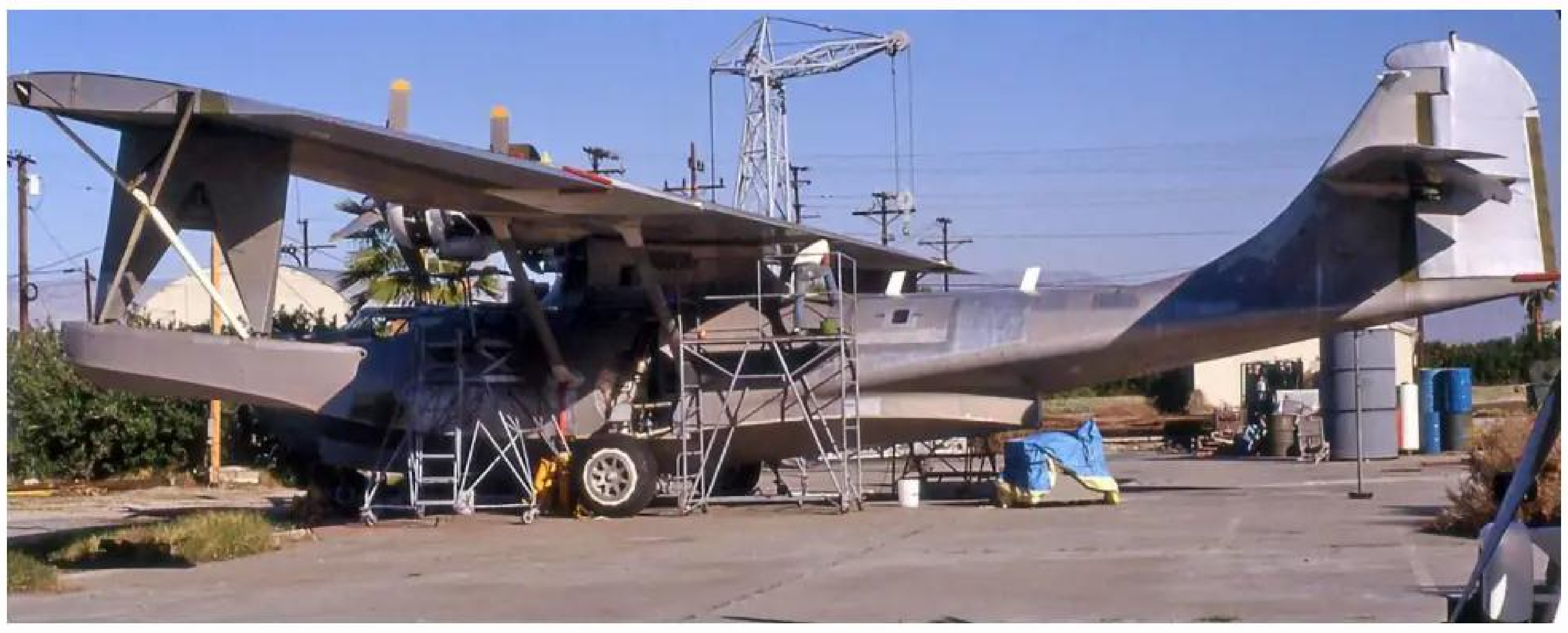
CATALINA AIRLIFT

In what was probably the aircraft's last "flight," a PBY-5A Catalina was airlifted to its new home at the Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum near historic NAS Whidbey Island in Washington. This was done courtesy of a Washington National Guard CH-47F Chinook heavy-lift helicopter. Whidbey Island has been an important Naval Air Station for over eight decades and once hosted dozens of operational Catalinas.

First, let's examine the Catalina. It operated with the Navy as BuNo 33968 and flew operational missions over the harsh Aleutian Islands. The aircraft was overhauled in Washington and continued to fly from the Coast Guard base at Port Angeles and from Ault Field (now NAS Whidbey Island). Eventually flown to NAF Litchfield Park, it was one of a number of Catalinas purchased surplus in the late 1950s by Thomas W. Kendall who had dreams of converting PBYs into aerial yachts under the Landseaire designation.

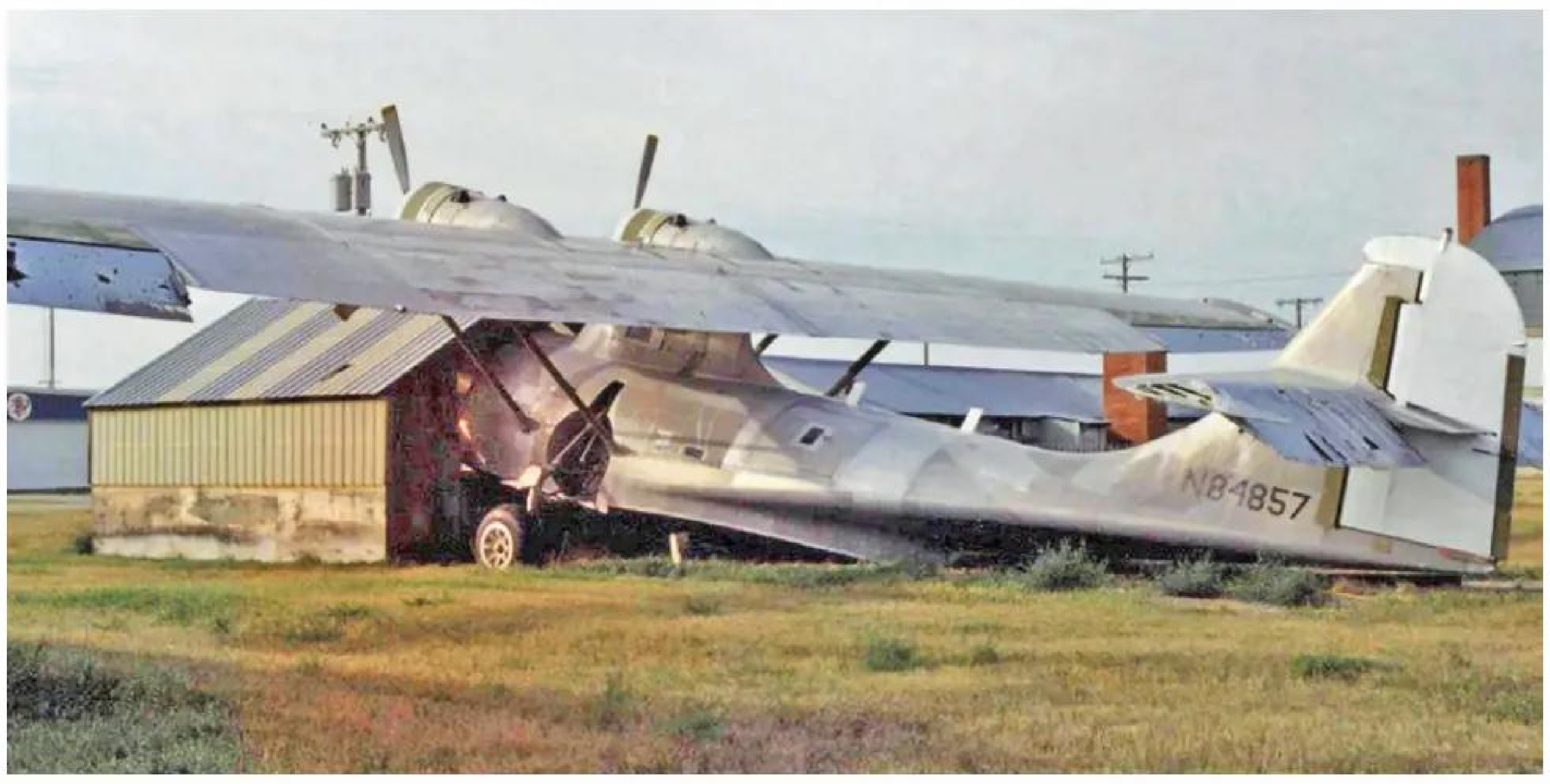
The aircraft was registered N5582V and eventually flown to Orange County Airport where it was parked with a number of other Kendall Catalinas. In the end, only a few Landseaire conversions were undertaken and in 1965 82V was sold to a Texan who had the aircraft flown to Palm Springs, California, where it was parked with several other PBYs near a facility owned by Dr. Forest Bird who had created the unique four-engine PBY Innovator. It appears some work was done on the plane to perhaps convert it into a cargo hauler but the engines were eventually removed and it just sat. At some point, the Canadian civil registration of C-GVTF was reserved but it was never taken up.

Wartime photo of Catalina operations out of Whidbey Island.



PBY-5A N5582V being worked upon at Palm Springs. The fuselage blisters have been removed and replaced by cargo hatches.

In 1980, the plane was sold to a business in Wyoming with the new registration of N84857 but it just kept sitting at Palm Springs, even though engines had now been added. In 1985, it was purchased by an individual who was working a deal with the Israeli Air Force Museum. The plane was put into ferry condition and flown to Billings, Montana, to receive further work before the long and slow flight to Israel.



Now registered as N84857, the PBY-5A was photographed after its tragic takeoff attempt for a flight to Israel when the brakes failed, the plane went off the runway and down a steep embankment, killing the pilot.

On 9 May 1985, tragedy struck. The plane was apparently taxiing for takeoff when the brakes failed and the aircraft went off the runway and down an embankment. The Catalina has a weak point right in the cockpit area and on impact, the nose folded. The pilot was killed and two others aboard received slight injuries. The damaged airframe was dragged back onto the field but bad luck continued to haunt the plane. A replacement nose had been obtained from Canadian Canso A CF-IDS (ex-RCAF 11029) but then a tornado hit the field, doing further damage to the Cat during August 1999.

The Catalina was then disassembled and moved by trucks to Skagit Regional Airport in Burlington, Washington, where work continued on the project under the direction of Sound Aircraft Repair. Prior to this in 1998, a small contingent of PBY veterans and enthusiasts met at NAS Whidbey Island to work up plans to create a museum that would have a Catalina as a centerpiece. They called themselves the PBY Memorial Association but they had a few problems — they did not have a PBY, nor a location, nor any money! They did not let these factors get in the way of their enthusiasm.

In 2004, the group got a building — sort of. It was an abandoned gas station in the town of Oak Harbor. Museum volunteers got to work with the help of locals and began placing memorabilia in the building to honor the Catalina crews. Things got better in 2008 when, thanks to a lot of help from the USN, the museum moved to what was called Building 12 and it was located inside the former seaplane base at Whidbey Island. There was also now a name change to Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum and at this point they began searching for a Cat.

The group was made aware of N84857 at Skagit Airport. Under the direction of Alan Hodgkins, the Cat had been repainted in a Navy tri-color camouflage scheme and some restoration work had been undertaken. The group just did not have the funds to purchase the PBY but Alan helped them out in acquiring a Pratt & Whitney R-1830 cutaway engine for display which was very generous. Then, the situation got better. An offer was tendered to the museum whereby they could purchase the Catalina for just $60,000 — a low figure. However, they only had $10,000 in the bank. What this did was kick off an intense fund-raising campaign that saw the money raised and the purchase finalized. Now the only remaining problem was moving the Cat from the airfield to downtown Oak Harbor.

Few helicopters are better for moving something the size and weight of a Catalina than the mighty Chinook. A deal was struck whereby a Model 234 Chinook with the Canadian registration C-FHFB was utilized for the mission. The wings were removed from the PBY and the aircraft “took off” for its short flight.

US Navy Capt. Gerral David was the commander of NAS Whidbey Island during this time period and he was a big help in getting the plane moved, refurbishing Building 12 to what became known as Simard Hall, and doing many other tasks that greatly aided the new museum. Hence, the Cat was named *Gerral’s Girl* but there were problems ahead.

Whidbey Island is a very active military base and getting visitors to the museum was difficult. Then came the bad news that the lease on Simard Hall would not be renewed.

In 2014, a lease became available on a former furniture store in downtown Oak Harbor and a deal was struck. The museum volunteers then moved all the artifacts, memorabilia, library, and administration offices into the 4500-sq-ft structure. Then, they had to move the Catalina. Once again, the outer wing panels came off and at night during January 2015 townspeople were treated to the strange sight of a wingless amphibian being carefully towed down the main street.

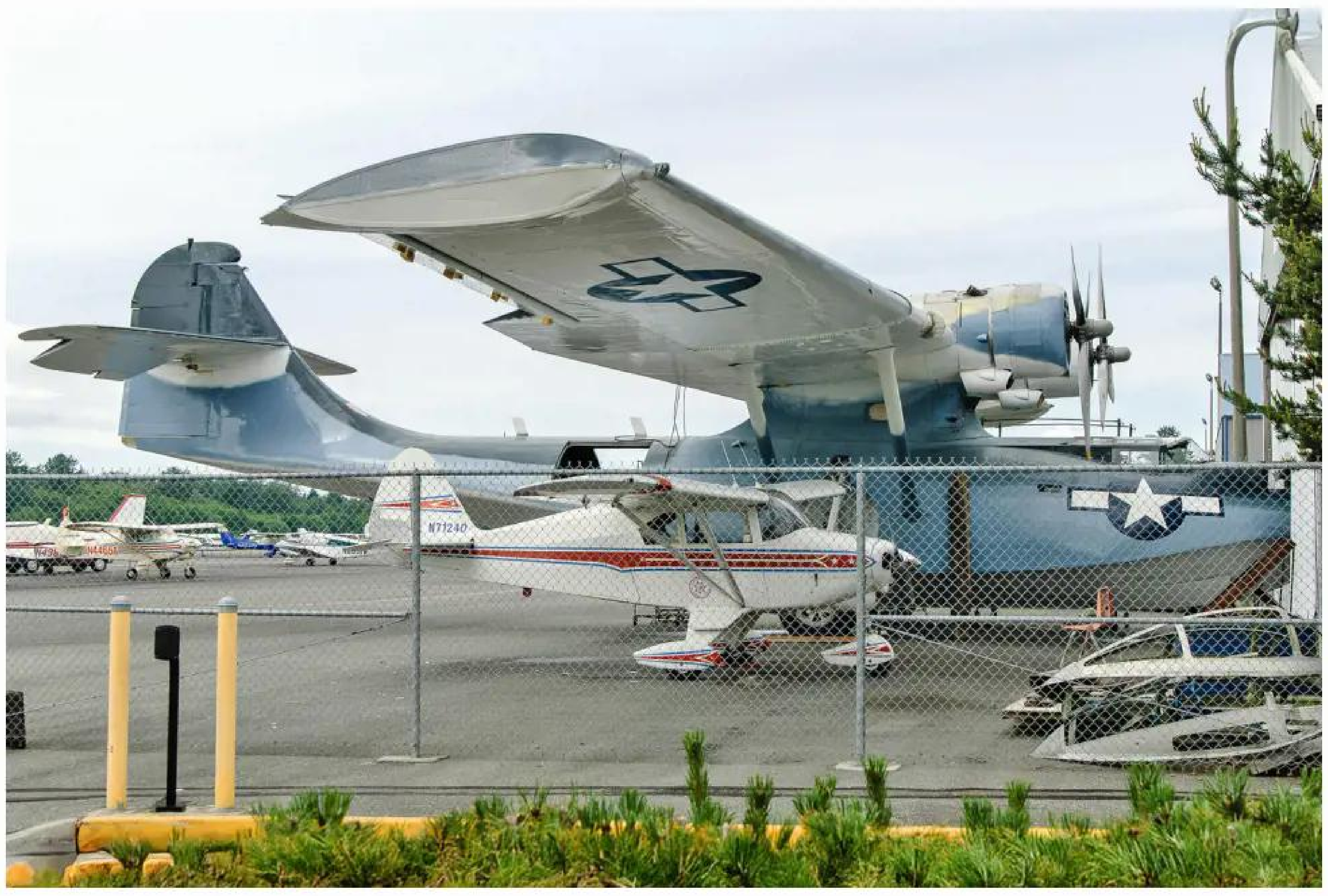
The aircraft was placed on a pad across from the former furniture store, outer wings reattached, and for the next ten years volunteers worked long and hard on attempting to preserve the airframe in the difficult weather while also adding more original equipment to the interior.

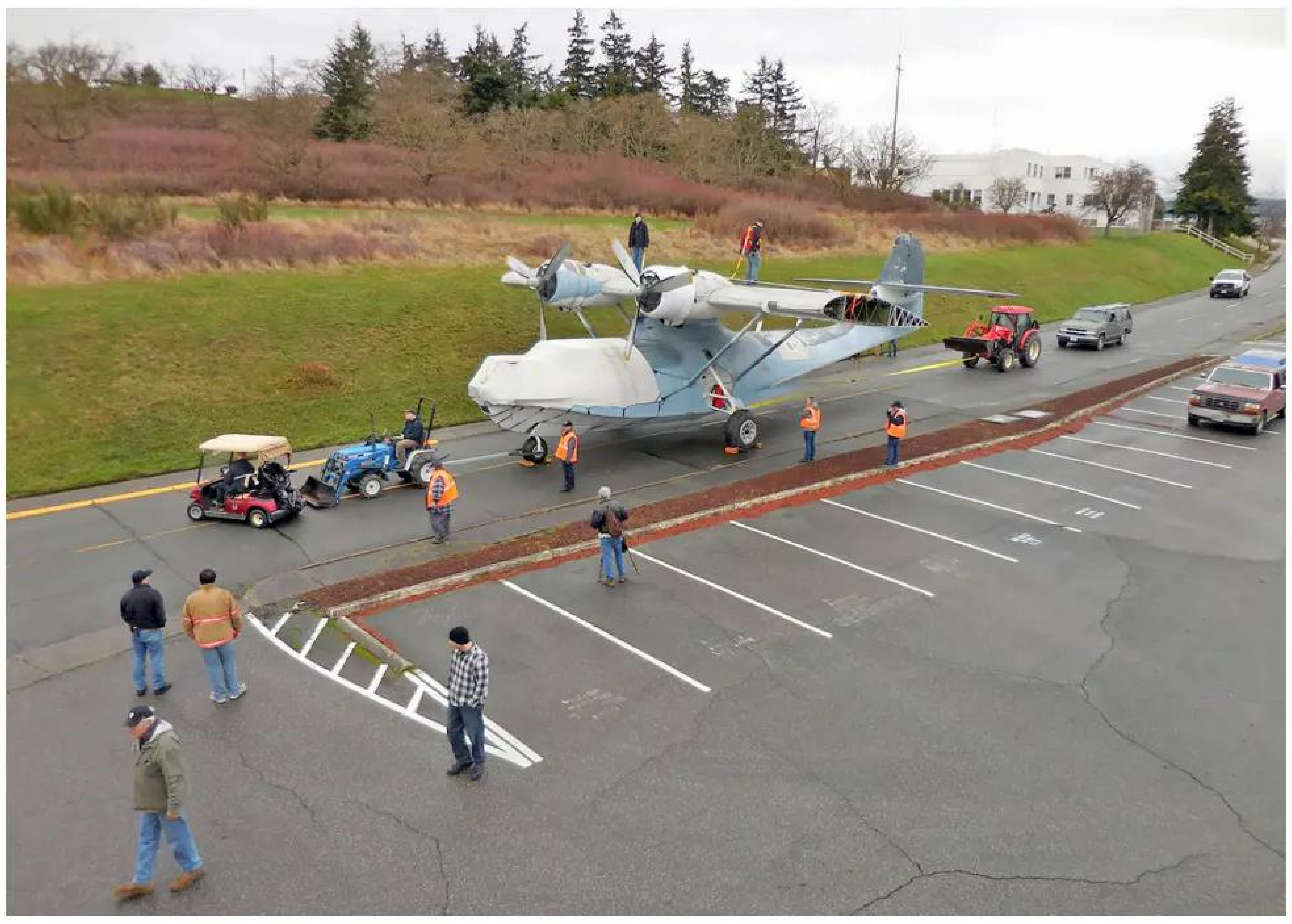
The hard-workers at the museum finalized plans in 2024 for an entirely new building to house the museum. It would be constructed on Ault Field Road between NAS Whidbey Island and Oak Harbor. As the museum’s new building rapidly got completed, all the collections had to be moved once again but the Cat would stay in place in downtown Oak Harbor until a pavement pad could be constructed to support the aircraft. Road transportation was again considered but there were a lot of difficulties including possible damage to the aircraft and road delays for local citizens.

Since a Chinook was utilized in the original move, why not use a Chinook again? This is where the men and women of the Washington National Guard’s B Company of the 1-168th General Support Aviation Battalion stepped into the breech. Moving the Catalina on its short flight would also be an excellent training exercise and plans got underway for the ambitious project.

The Cat’s outer wing panels were again removed along with the large rudder. On 18 January, the fuselage was towed a short distance to a lot near the now-demolished gas station that was the museum’s first home. On the 20th, the CH-47F Chinook arrived and the crew attached the complex cable lifting system to the PBY.

After a close examination by the helicopter crew, everything looked good and the Chinook thundered aloft on the 20th. As the cables tightened and the PBY began to leave the ground, a warning light came on in the helicopter’s cockpit. The Cat was not maintaining the correct angle for a stable flight so the crew carefully lowered the plane back onto the field.

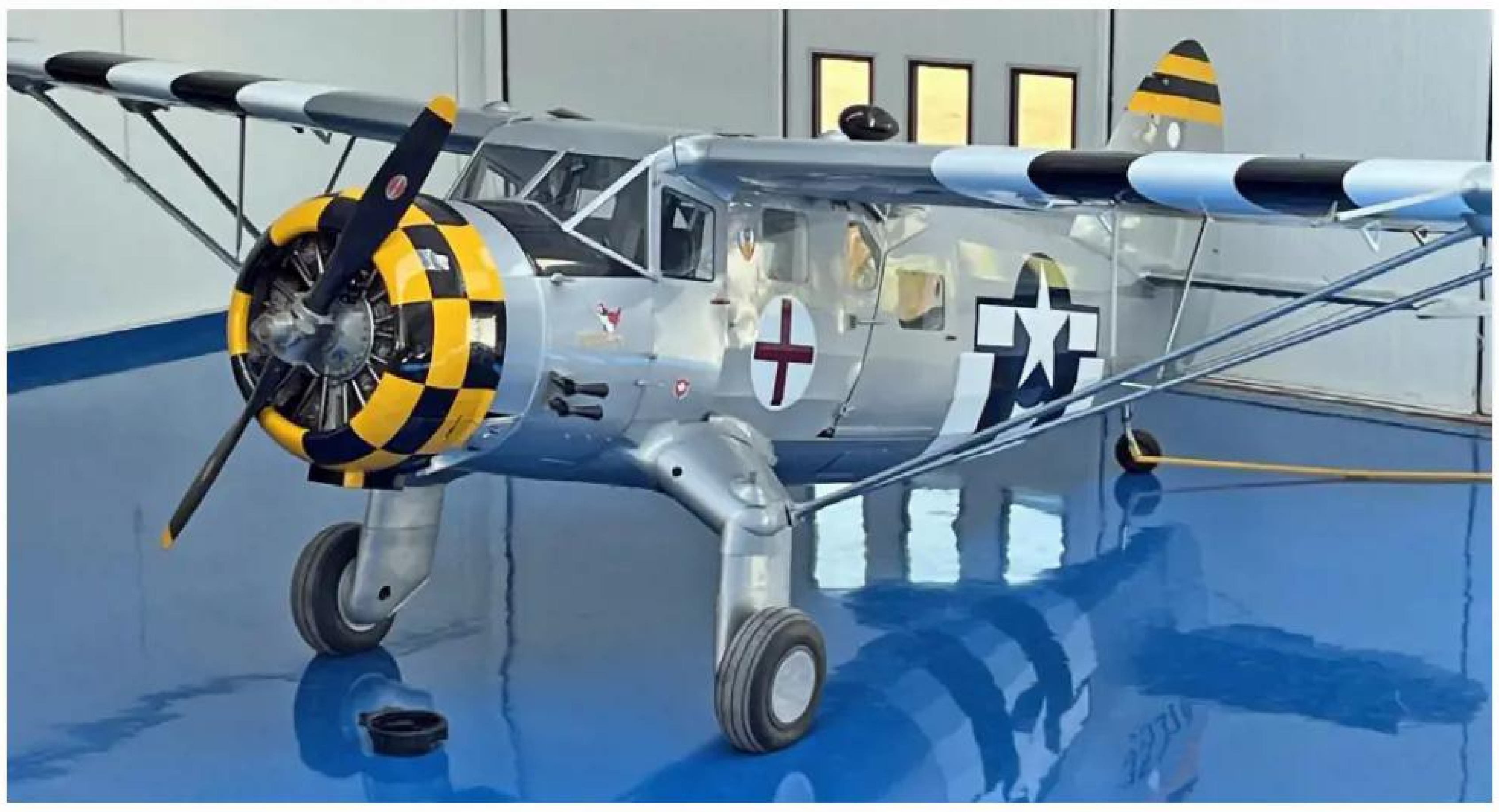

The PBY-5A after being moved to Washington where restoration work was started prior to being acquired by the museum. Note the open cargo hatches on the side of the fuselage.


Moving the Catalina to the lot where it would be airlifted to its new home.

After some readjusting and rethinking, the cables were lengthened and the load recentered. On the 21st, the lift was tried again and everything went perfectly. The Chinook and its load rose majestically into the air and headed to the pad next to the new museum. The Cat was gently lowered, cables undone, and the Chinook headed home after performing a most worthwhile task.

There is still a lot of work to be done including reattaching the outer wing panels and the rudder. To learn how you can aid this ambitious project, please visit the Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum website at *pnwnam.org*. Thanks to the museum and Washington National Guard for providing many of the photographs.

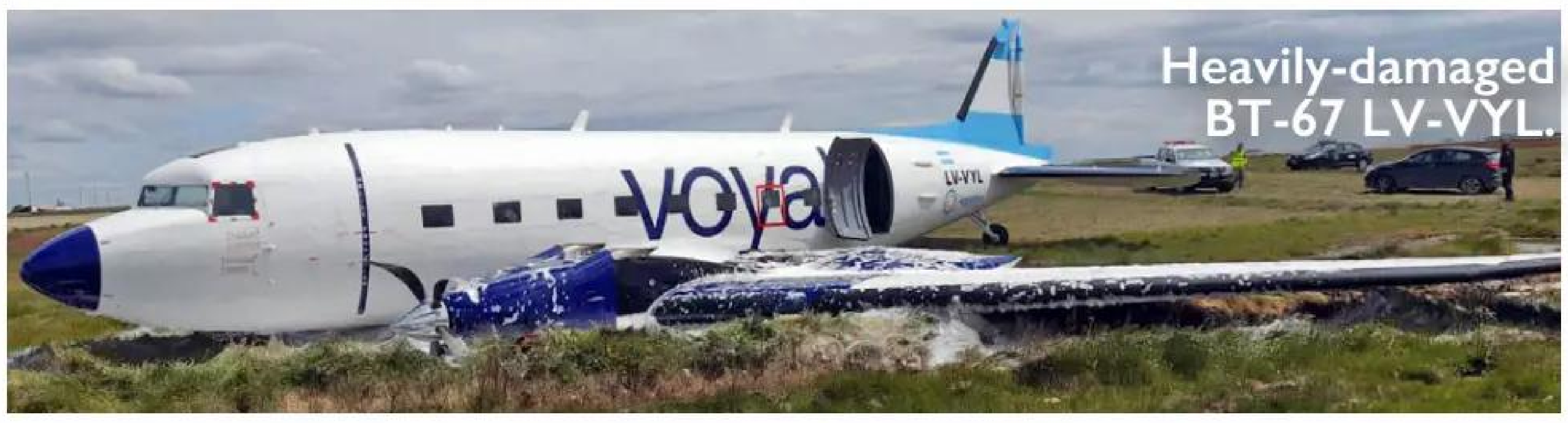
Chinook meets Catalina.



The Dutch UC-64A after receiving its USAAF paint scheme.

DUTCH NORSEMAN

In Holland, work is nearing completion on returning a Noorduyn Norseman to flying condition. Although he lived in Canada, Robert B. Noorduyn was the third-largest Dutch aircraft builder and the Noorduyn Foundation has been set up to honor his achievements. Restoration of the UC-64A has been taking place at Lelystad Airport and is well advanced. The aircraft has been painted to represent a Norseman flown by the USAAF's 320th Air Transport Squadron, 27th Air Transport Group, 9th Air Force.



Heavily-damaged BT-67 LV-VYL.

BASLER BT-67 DAMAGED

On 1 December 29025, Basler BT-67 LV-VYL was heavily damaged when it ran off the runway at Rio Grande International Airport, Argentina. After veering off the left side of Runway 26, the landing gear collapsed resulting in damage to both engines, propellers, wings, and fuselage. The two crewmembers were unhurt.

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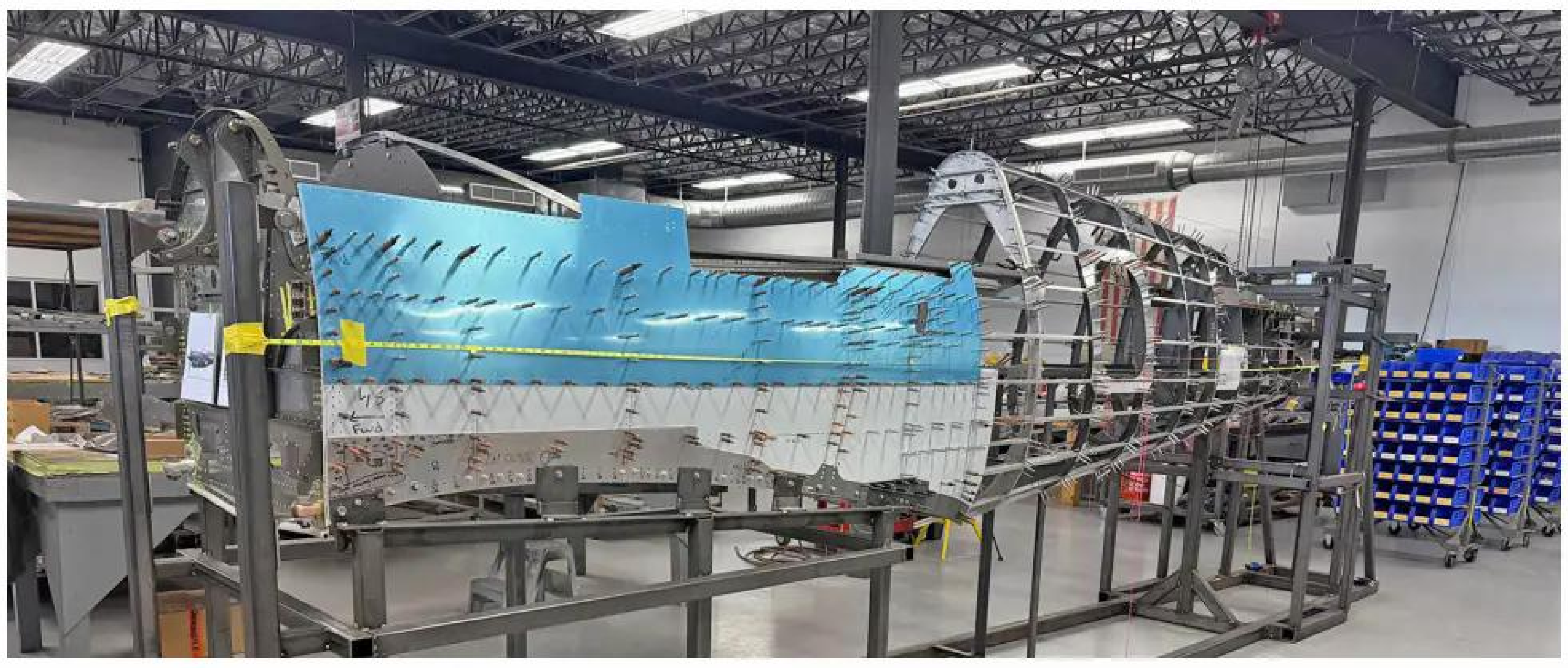
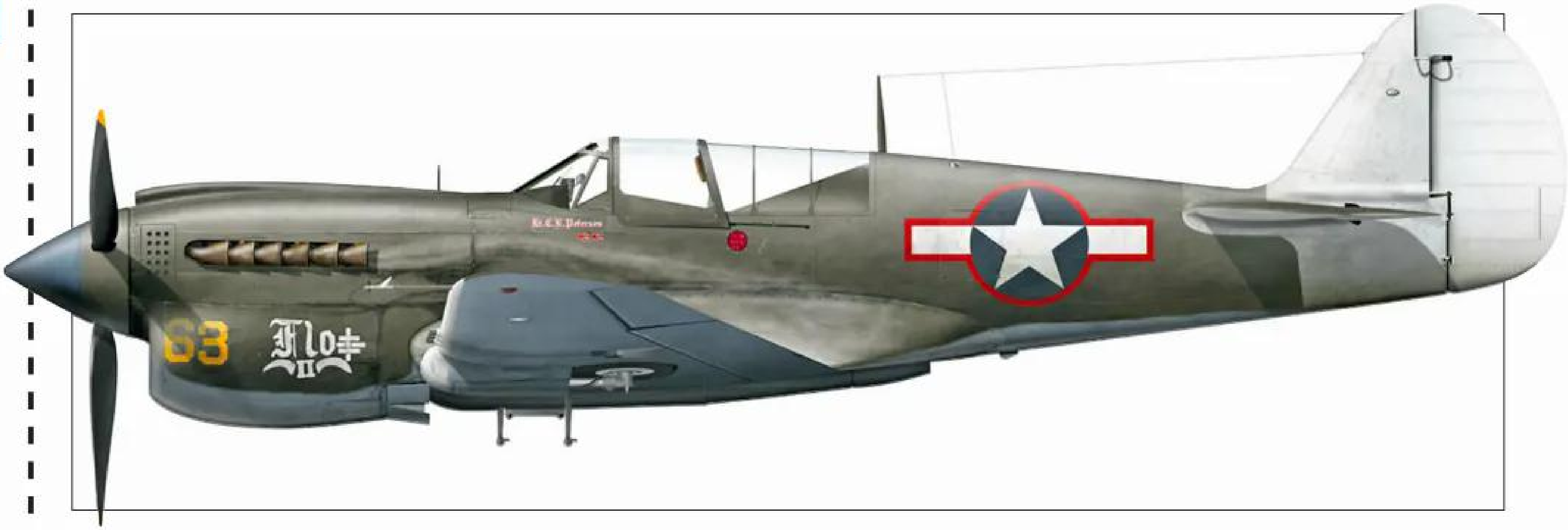


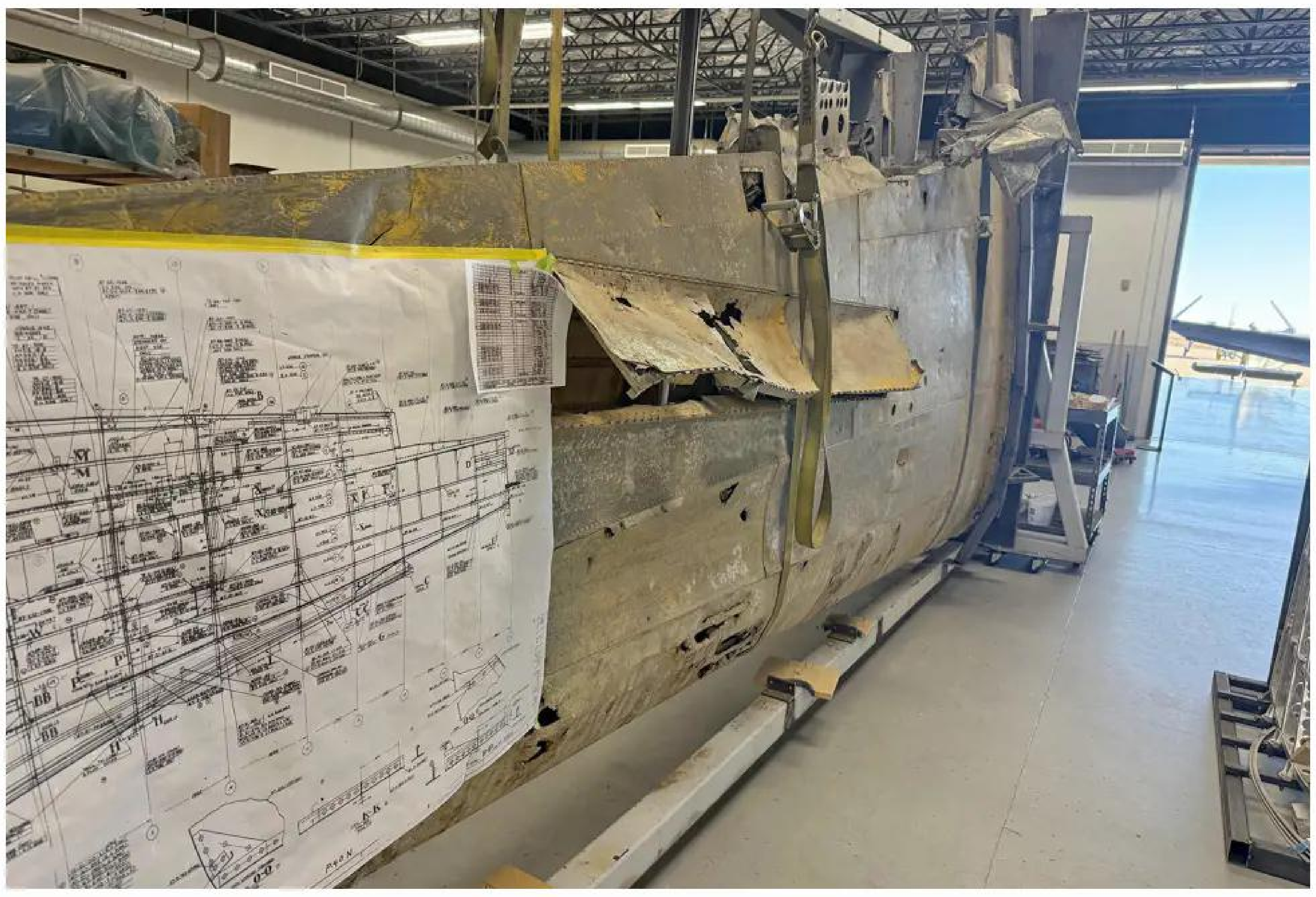
Left side of the P-40N showing the considerable progress that has been made in the restoration.



Profile drawing of the P-40N when it was serving with the 8th Fighter Squadron in New Guinea.

BILL'S WARHAWK

At Colorado Springs, Bill Klaers is busily working on his own Curtiss P-40N Warhawk and looking forward to the aircraft's completion. The aircraft is USAAF 42-105744 and it was recovered some years ago along with several P-47 Thunderbolts and two P-38 Lightnings. The aircraft has served with the 8th Fighter Squadron, 49th Fighter Group, in the Pacific. At some point, it carried the name *Flo II* along with the identifier *Yellow 63*. Between September 1942 and May 1944, the aircraft operated from several bases in New Guinea and the plane was flown by Charles Peterson who scored several victories with the aircraft. The plane was apparently damaged in an accident, not repaired, and pushed into a "burial" along with other damaged aircraft. "It's a great feeling to be working on an aircraft I can call my own," said Bill "and I am tremendously looking forward to its completion." We will be having more updates as the aircraft heads towards the sky and special thanks to Bill Barclay for supplying the photographs.



The unrestored wing still wearing its original paint. Note the blueprint taped to the skin.

The Warhawk will be finished in its original markings as *Flo II*.

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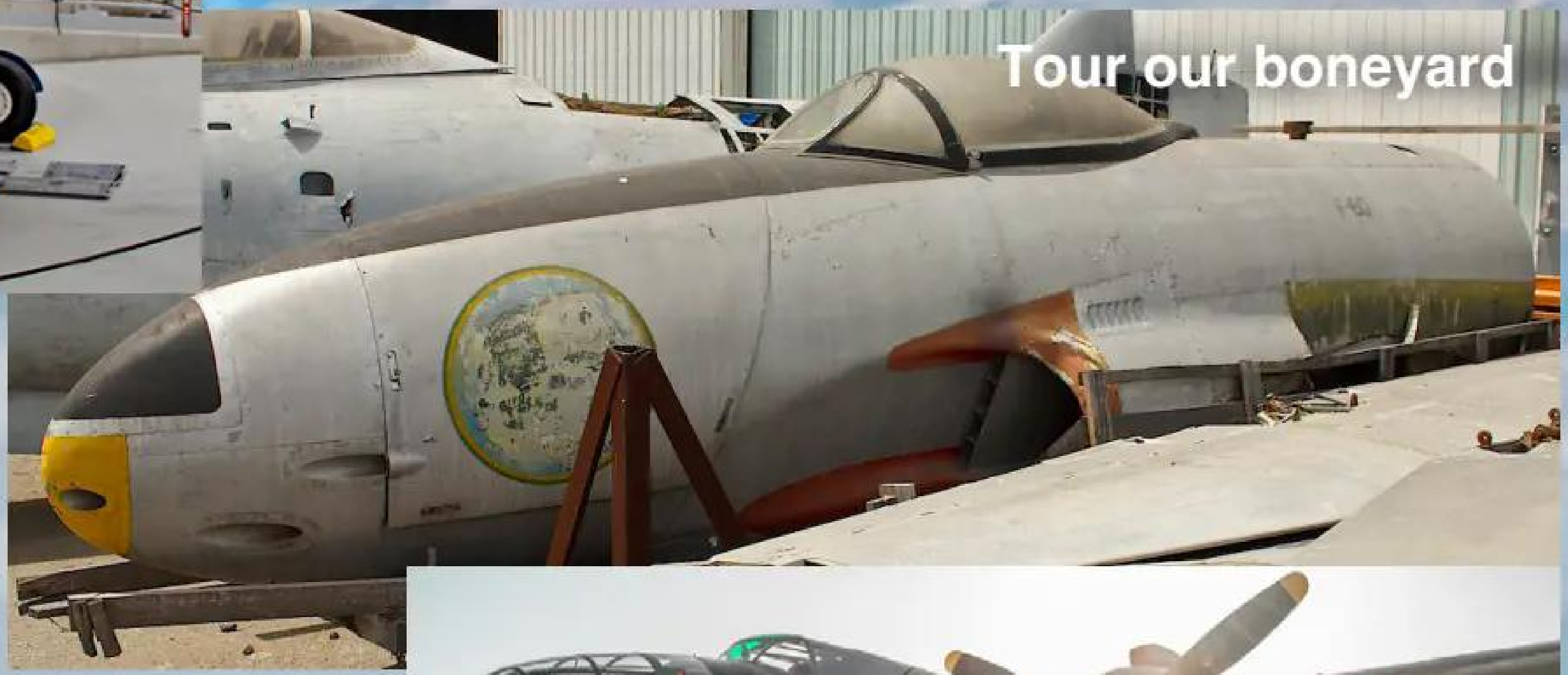
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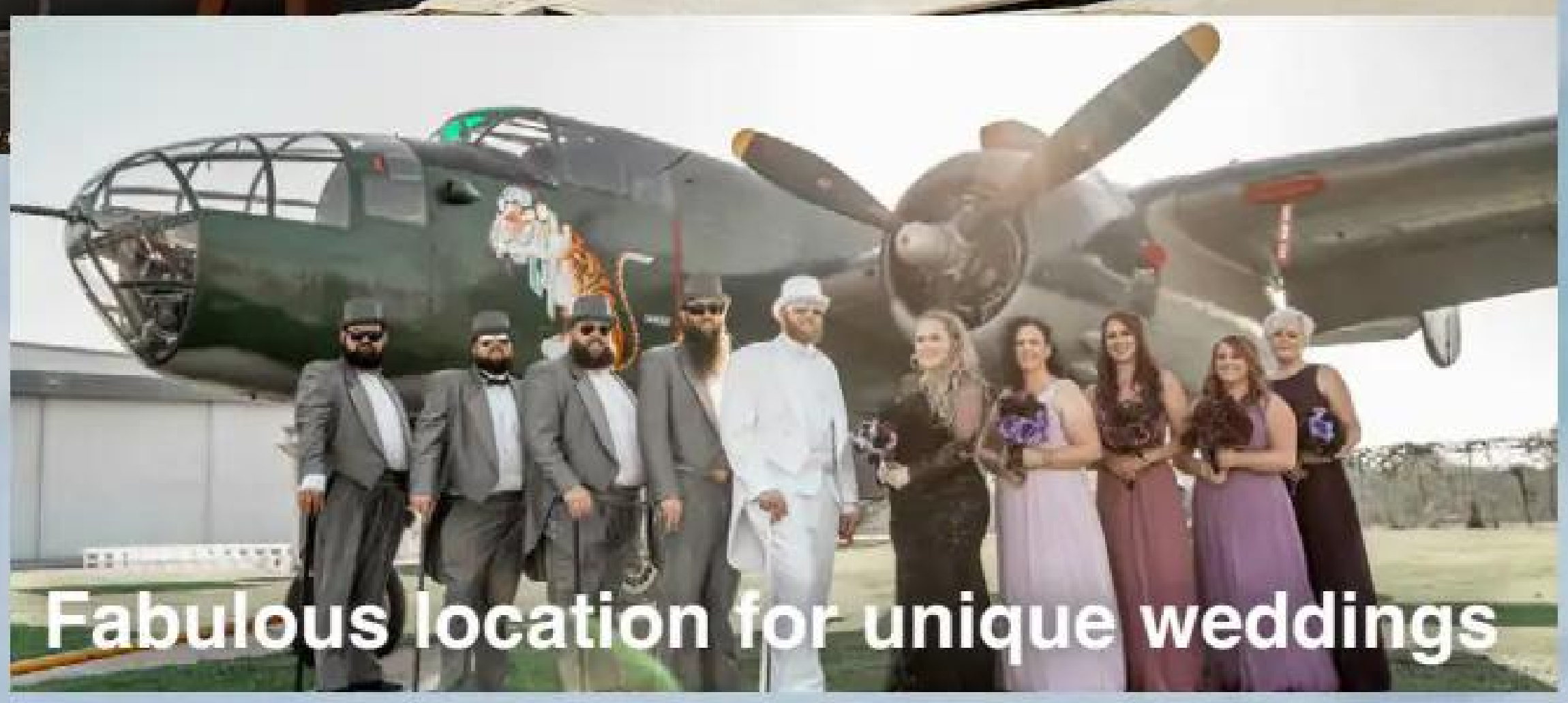
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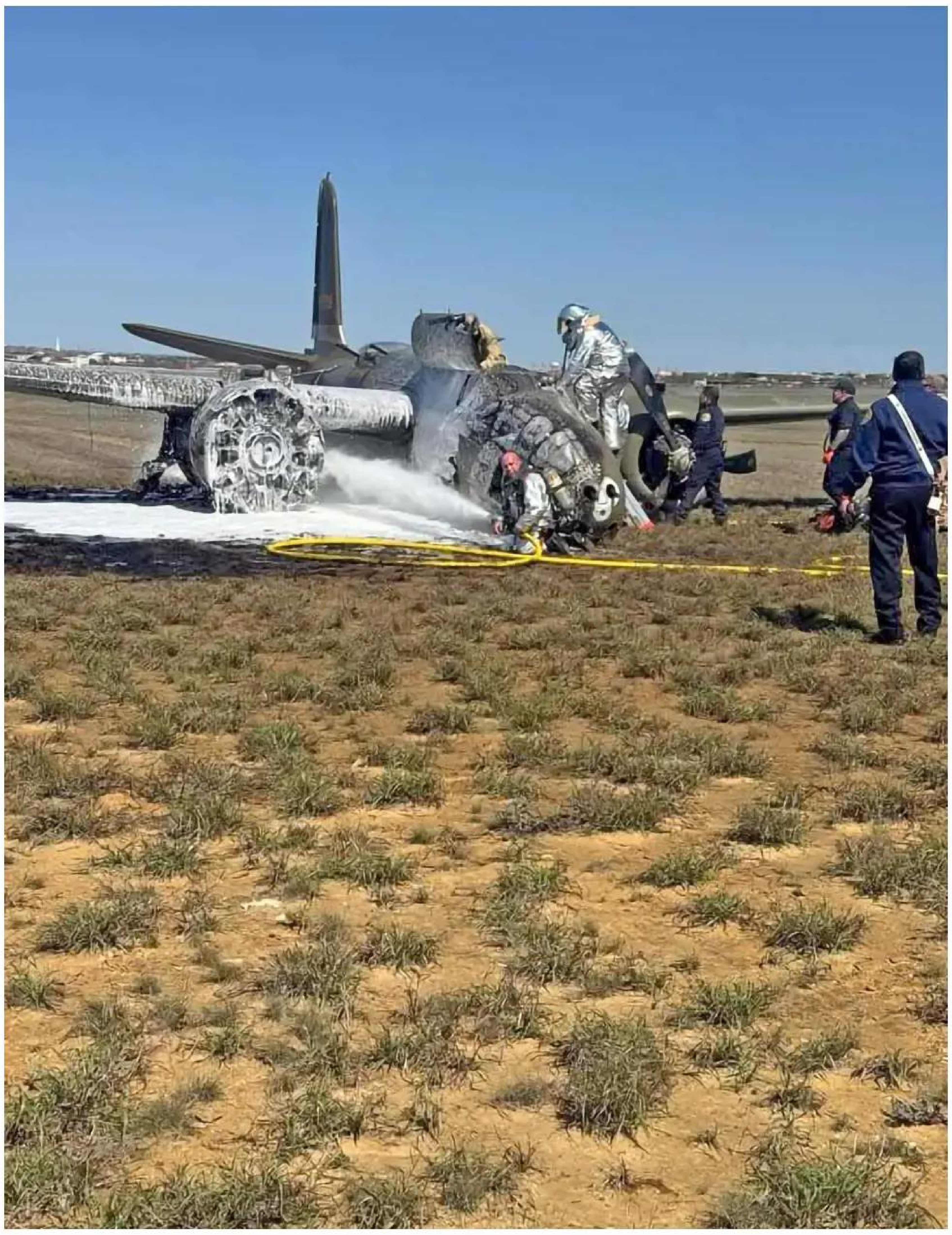
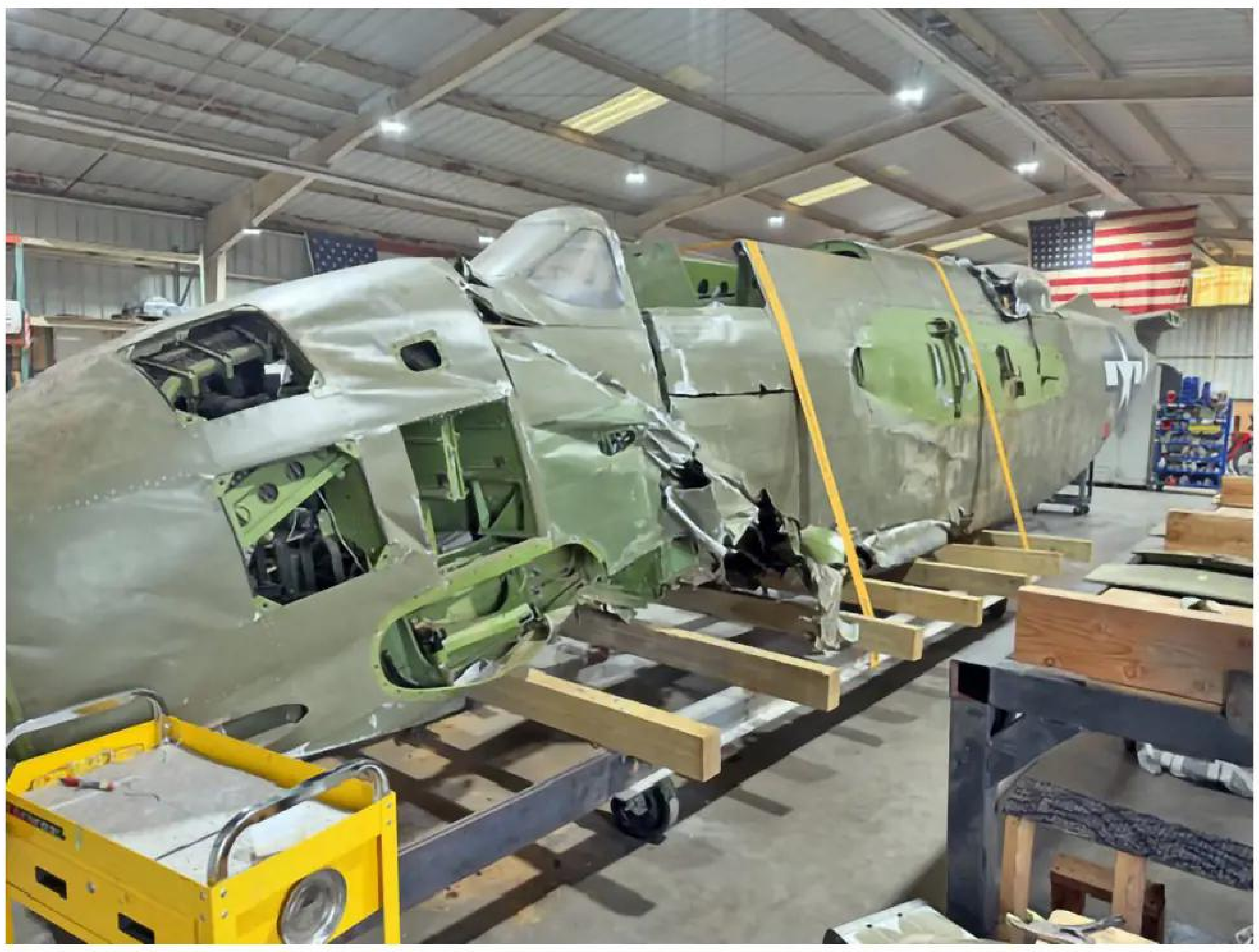
Lockheed 12 photo by Michael Malak Photography

Once Stewart Dawson got the Havoc on the ground, a fire broke out in the aircraft's forward section.



Fire crews contain the blaze on the right side of the Havoc.



Work underway disassembling the fuselage. (C. Scholl)

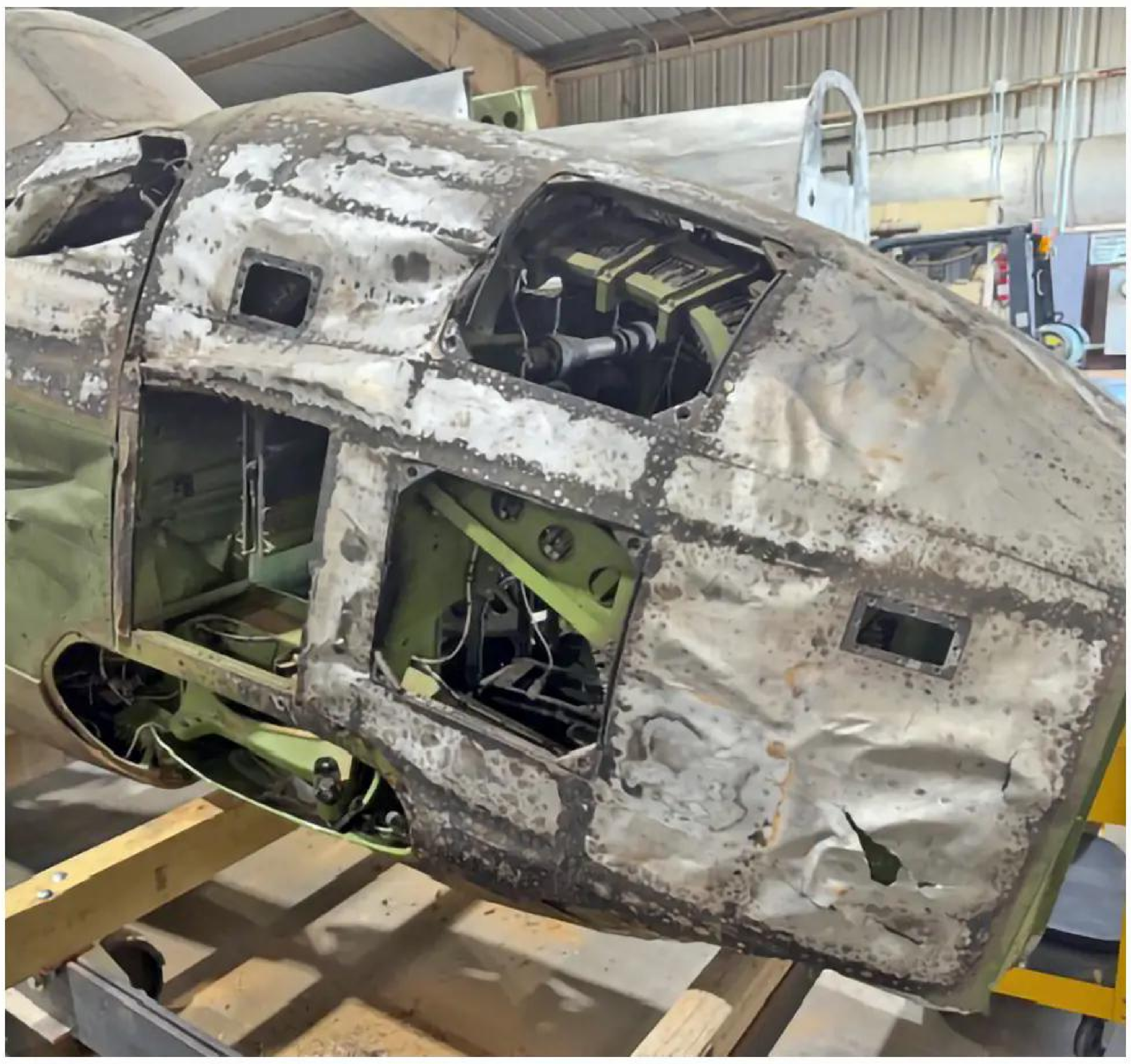
The fuselage of the Havoc arriving at Chino. (Carl Scholl)

BRINGING THE HAVOC BACK TO LIFE

On 16 February 2025, Stewart Dawson was doing his usual impeccable display of flying Rod Lewis' Douglas A-20J Havoc USAAF 43-21709, the world's only airworthy example. The Havoc, N747HS, was being flown at the Stars & Stripes Airshow taking place at Laredo International Airport when the pilot radioed that he had a problem. Following a step descent, he landed the aircraft gear-up in a field near the runway. After coming to a stop, there was a fire in the forward portion of the A-20 but it was put out by fire-fighters that had arrived on scene.

Dawson received head injuries and was rushed to a nearby hospital where he fortunately recovered. Stew had made the first flight on the aircraft on 15 July 2015 after a comprehensive restoration by Aero Trader. Although the damage was extensive, Rod was determined to get the plane back into the air once again. To aid restoration, unrestored A-20G 43-21627 that had been recovered by David Tallichet from New Guinea in 1974 (and had been on display at the Pima Air & Space Museum since 2004) was acquired and moved to the Cal-Aero Fab/Aero Trader facility at Chino Airport. The aircraft was serving with the 387th Bomb Squadron, 312th Bomb Group, when it was damaged by Japanese anti-aircraft fire and made an emergency landing at Tadji. It was not repaired and the airframe was shoved to the side.

During late January, the fuselage of N747HS arrived at Chino and work immediately began on disassembling the airframe so restoration work could start. We will be having further reports as the rebuild of this significant American aircraft continues.



Detail of the fire-damaged forward section. (C. Scholl)

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Fokker rudders and components are everywhere in the small museum.

Another of Engels' Fokker replicas.

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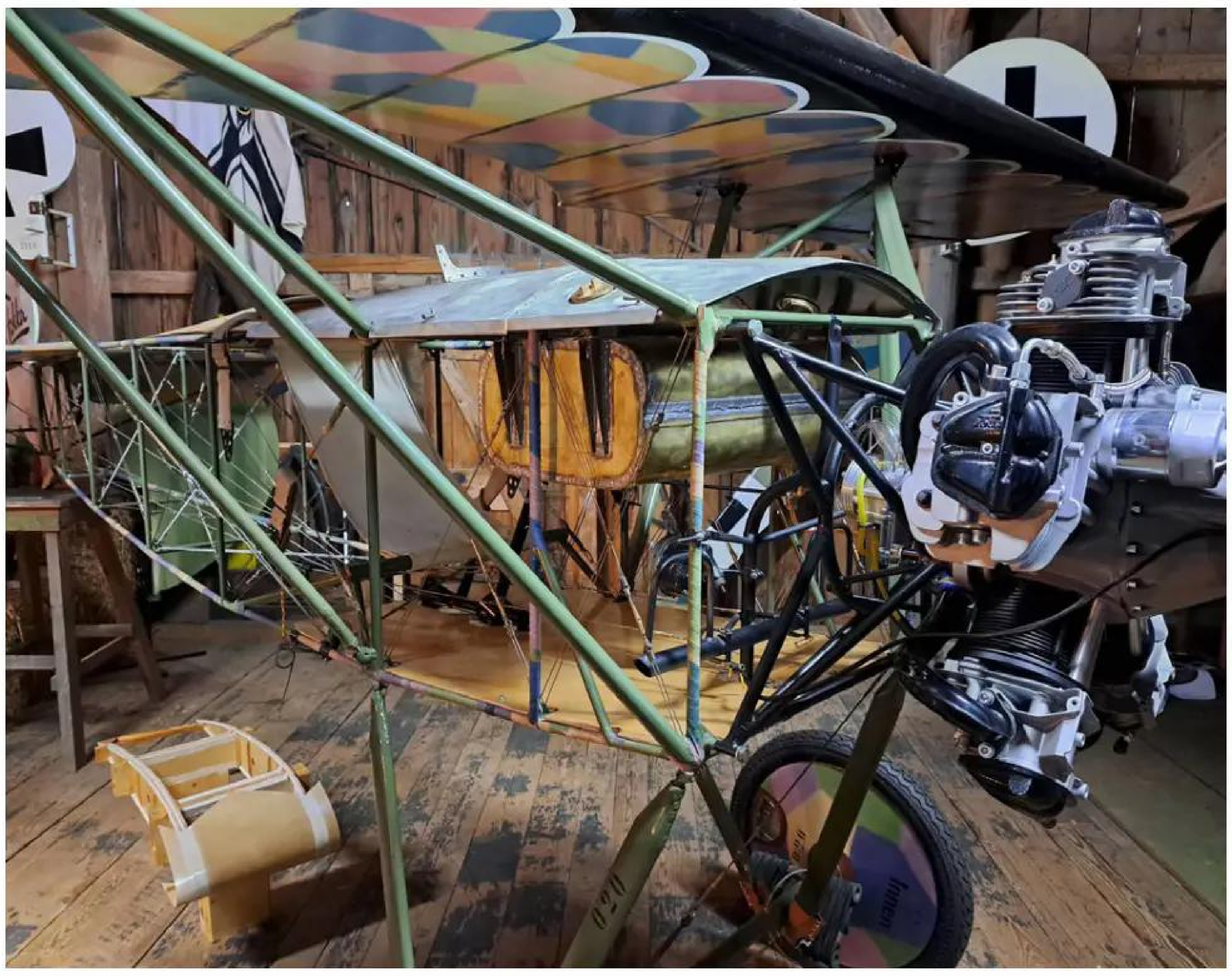
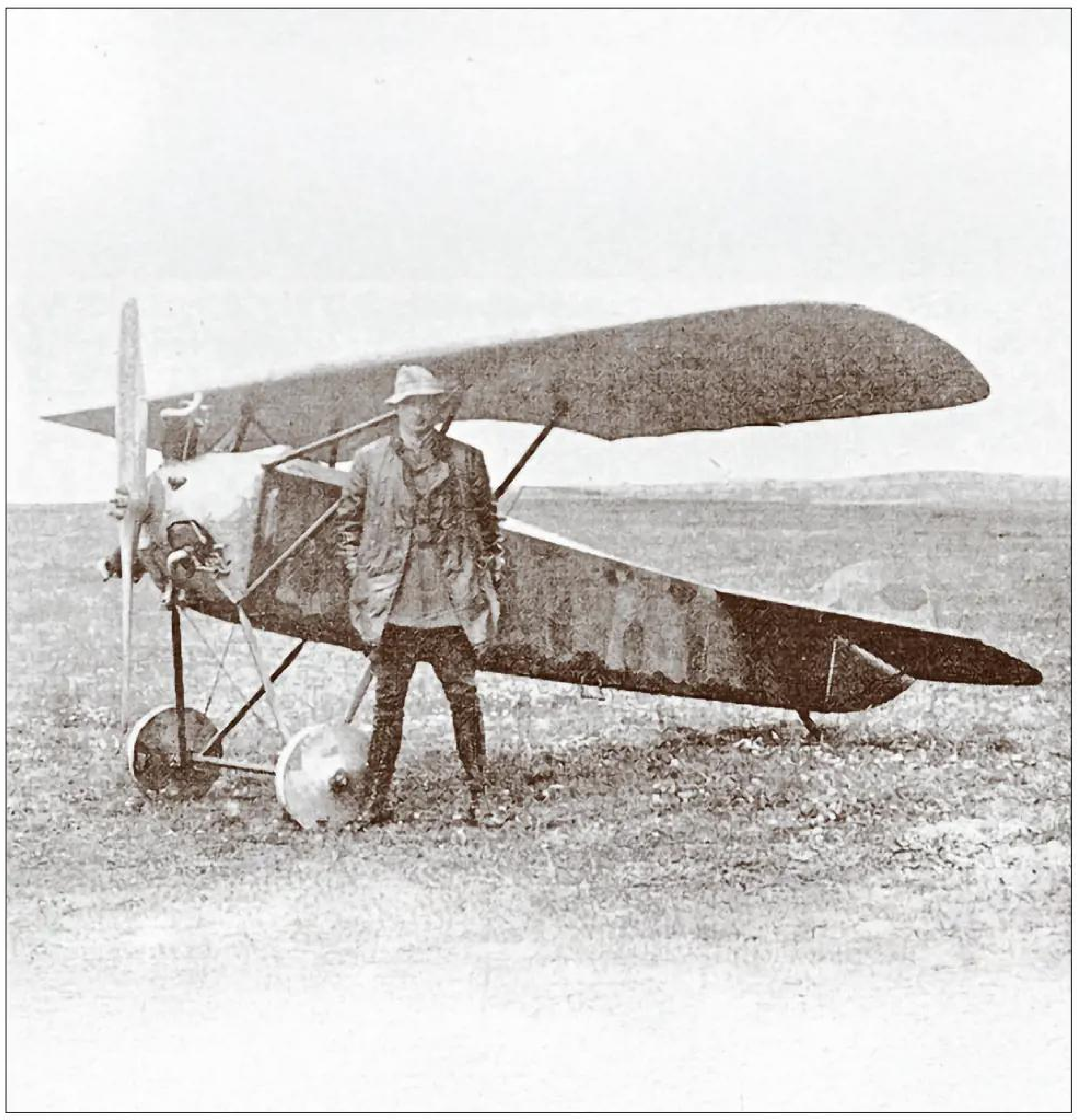


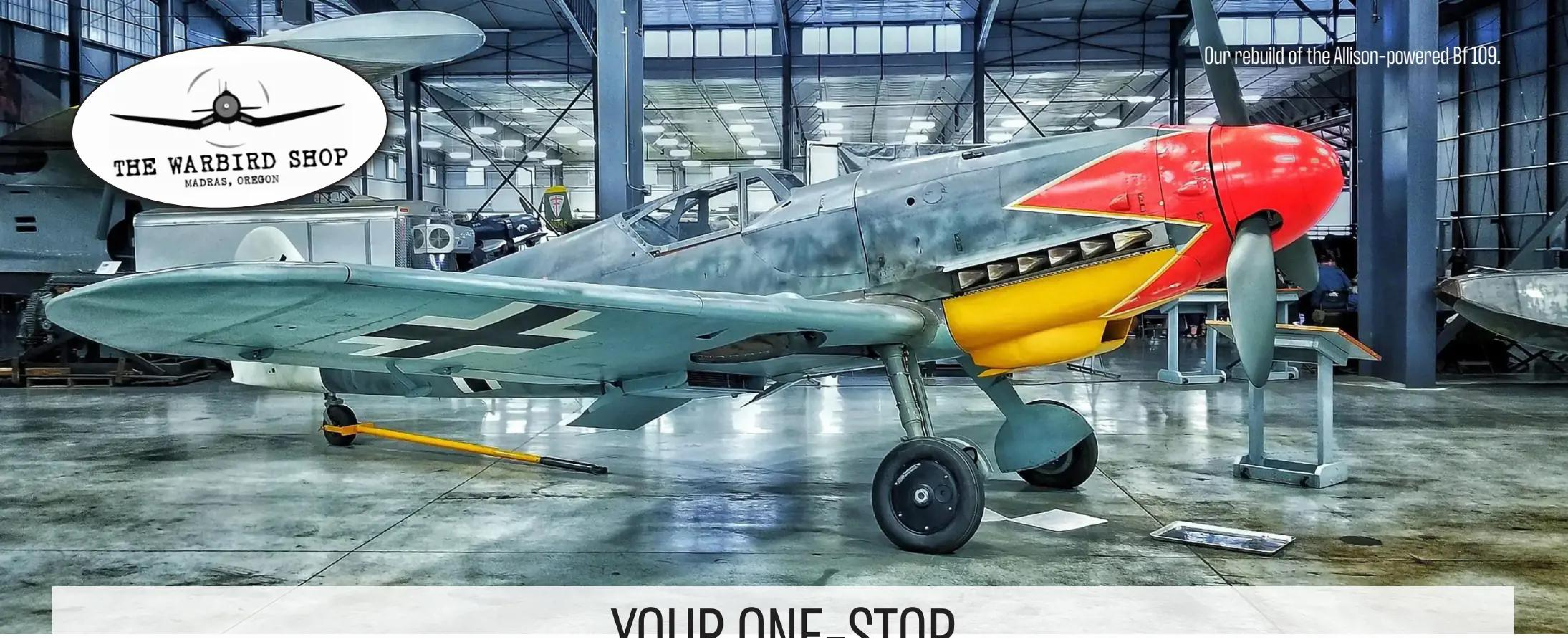
A partially completed V.40.

FOKKER FACTORY

In the small town of Waschenbeuren in Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany, is a museum named *Museum fur Flugzeugbau und technische Geschichte* that houses the lifetime collection of Achim Engels. This unique individual has devoted his life to researching, documenting, and building aircraft from the Great War. He builds them exactly the way the originals were constructed. He does not add any improvements. If they had warping wings, so do his aircraft. There are no pop-rivets, no Phillips head screws. The coverings are lightweight linen with roller-printed camouflage that is sealed with a coat of dope then a coat of varnish. There is no heat-shrunk Ceconite, no modern paints. Every detail is based on drawings, photos, and surviving pieces. He has also collected a wide range of other items including uniforms, motorcycles, radios, bicycles, and military camouflage. Currently, he is building a number of copies of the Fokker V.40. These curious little machines were built for private pilots at the end of the war but Fokker seems to have forgotten that Germany had lost and was in a monetary depression. Power came from a 35-hp Anzani engine and the design was a very light sports aircraft with a parasol wing. In many ways, it was the forerunner of today's light aircraft. The new aircraft is designated the Engels E.7 and it will be powered by a Verner Scarlett VL five-cylinder engine.



An original Fokker V.40 showing the very small size of the aircraft.



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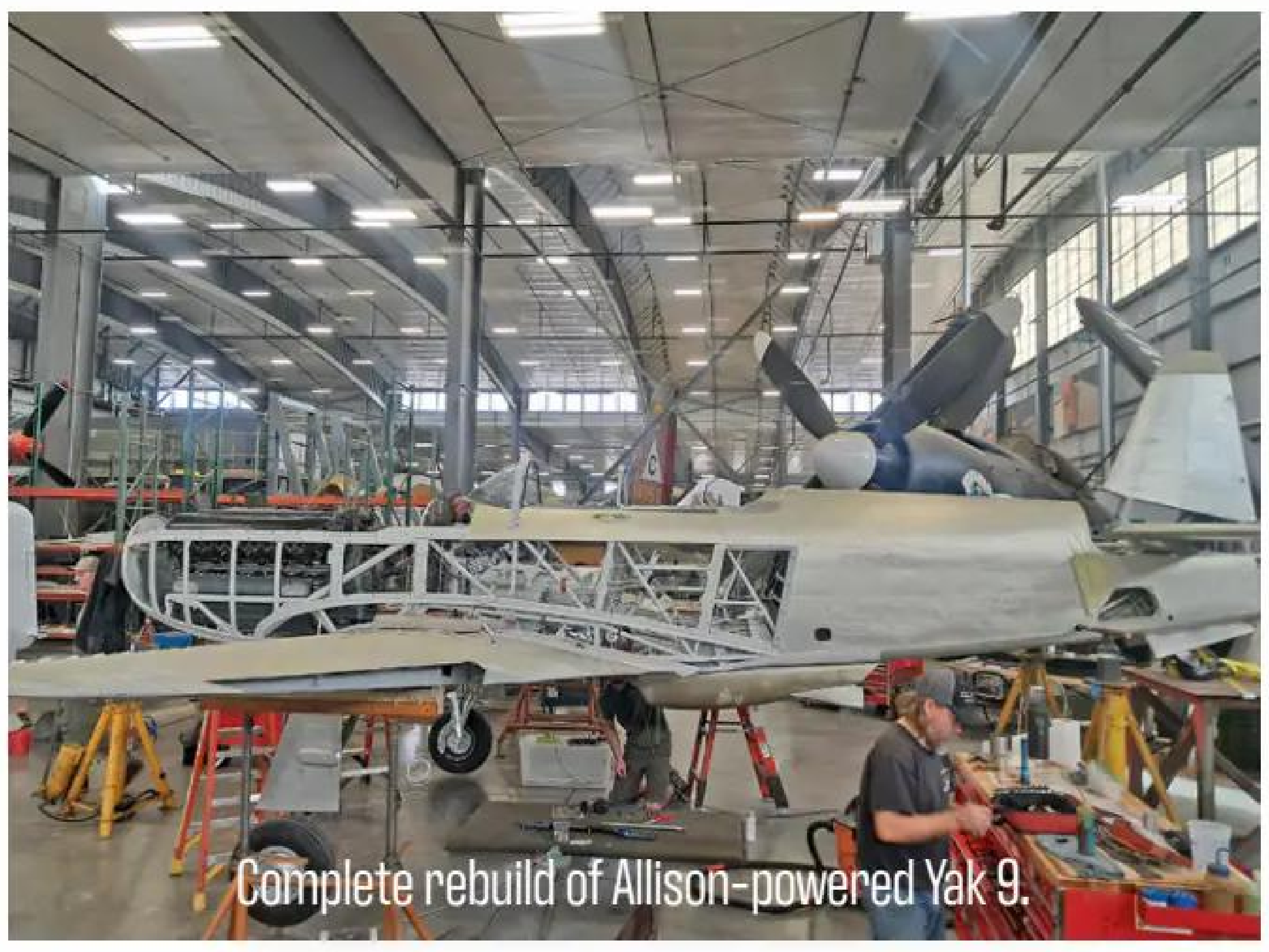

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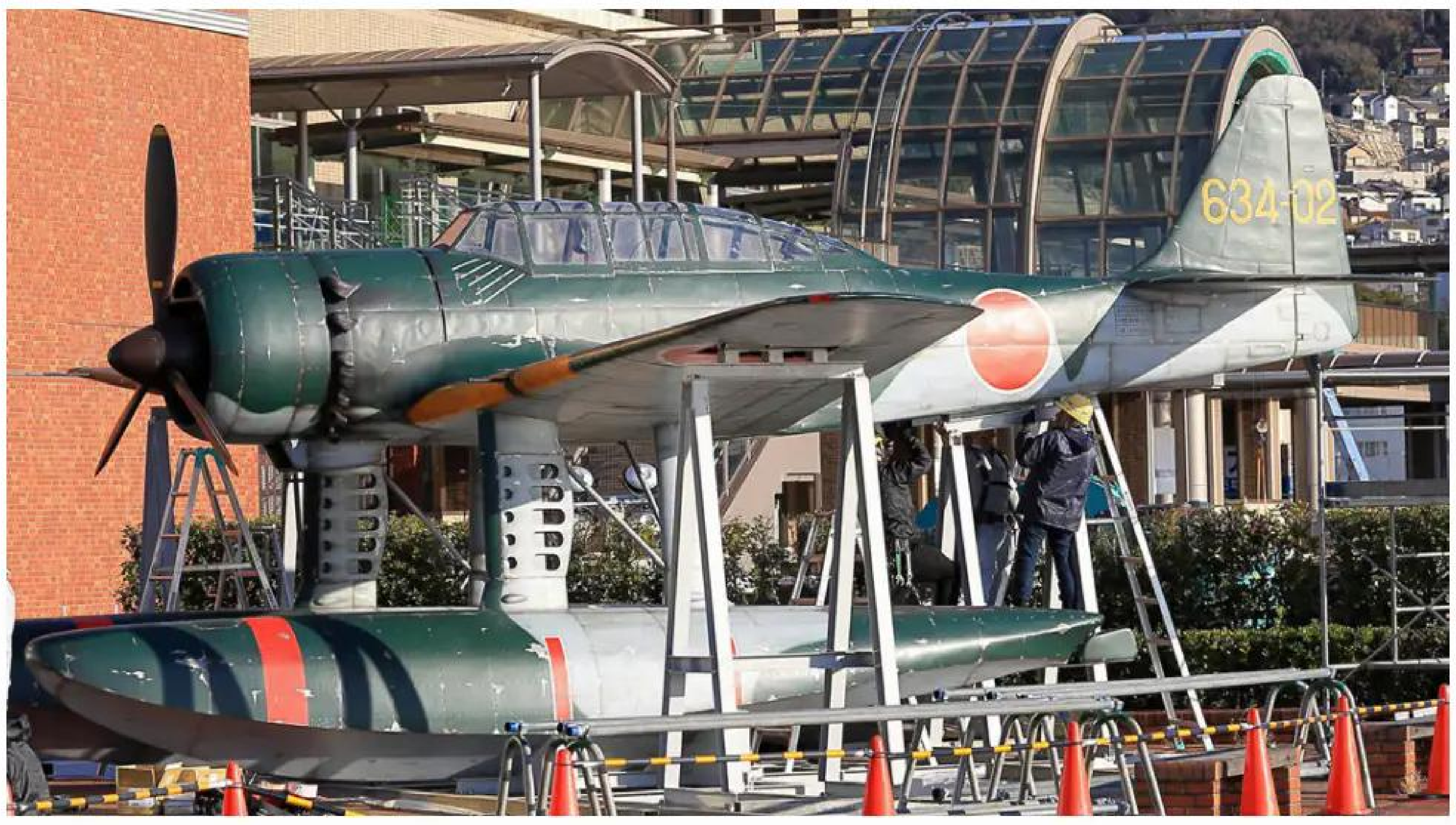
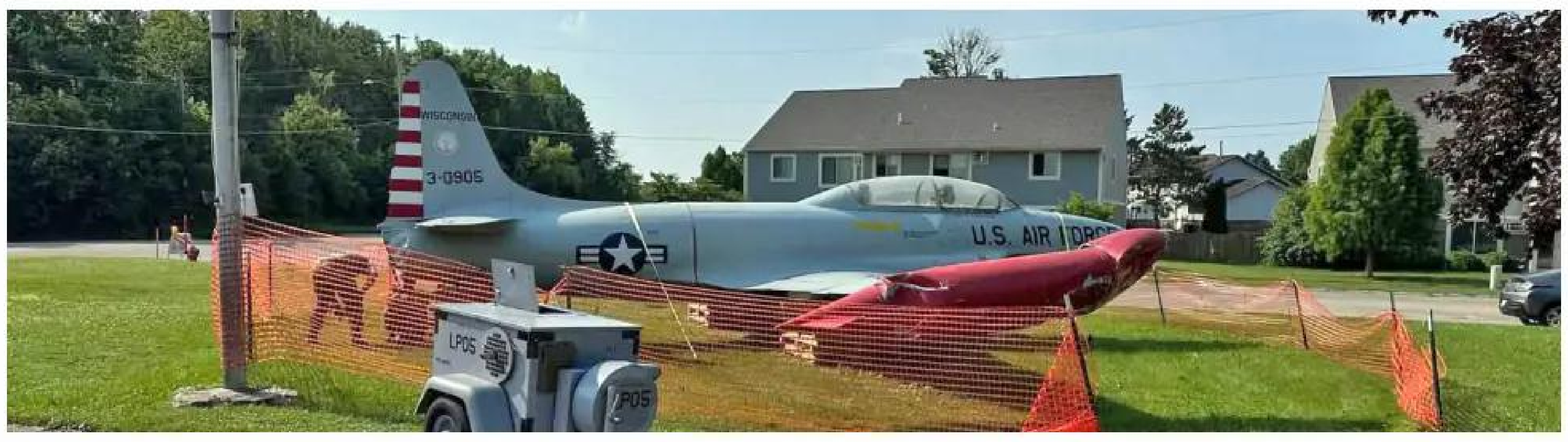


The mock-up Aichi E16A represents an extinct type of Japanese warplane.

MUSEUM GETS AN AICHI

With the unconditional surrender of Japan at the end of World War Two, Gen. Douglas MacArthur ordered virtually all surviving Japanese aircraft be destroyed except for war prizes shipped to the USA and other victorious Allied nations. There were also strict controls placed on what types of aircraft could be displayed in museums with a ban on anything that had a remotely warlike mission. Therefore, historic aviation in Japan is very slim indeed. The Kure Maritime Museum recently took delivery of an unusual mockup aircraft and it came about in an odd way. In Japan, the Kantai Collection game series is extremely popular and it features anthropomorphic warships and aircraft. Two mock-up Aichi E16A *Zuiun* (Auspicious Cloud, Allied name Paul) aircraft were constructed by DMM Games/Kadokawa as a tie-in to the game series. The aircraft was a two-seat recon platform used by the Japanese navy. The design was unusual, for a seaplane, in that it had dive brakes located in the front pylons of the float struts and this gave it a secondary role as a dive-bomber. As can be seen, the mock-up is very well detailed and now represents an extinct type. It was permanently installed in January at the Yamato Museum in Kure.

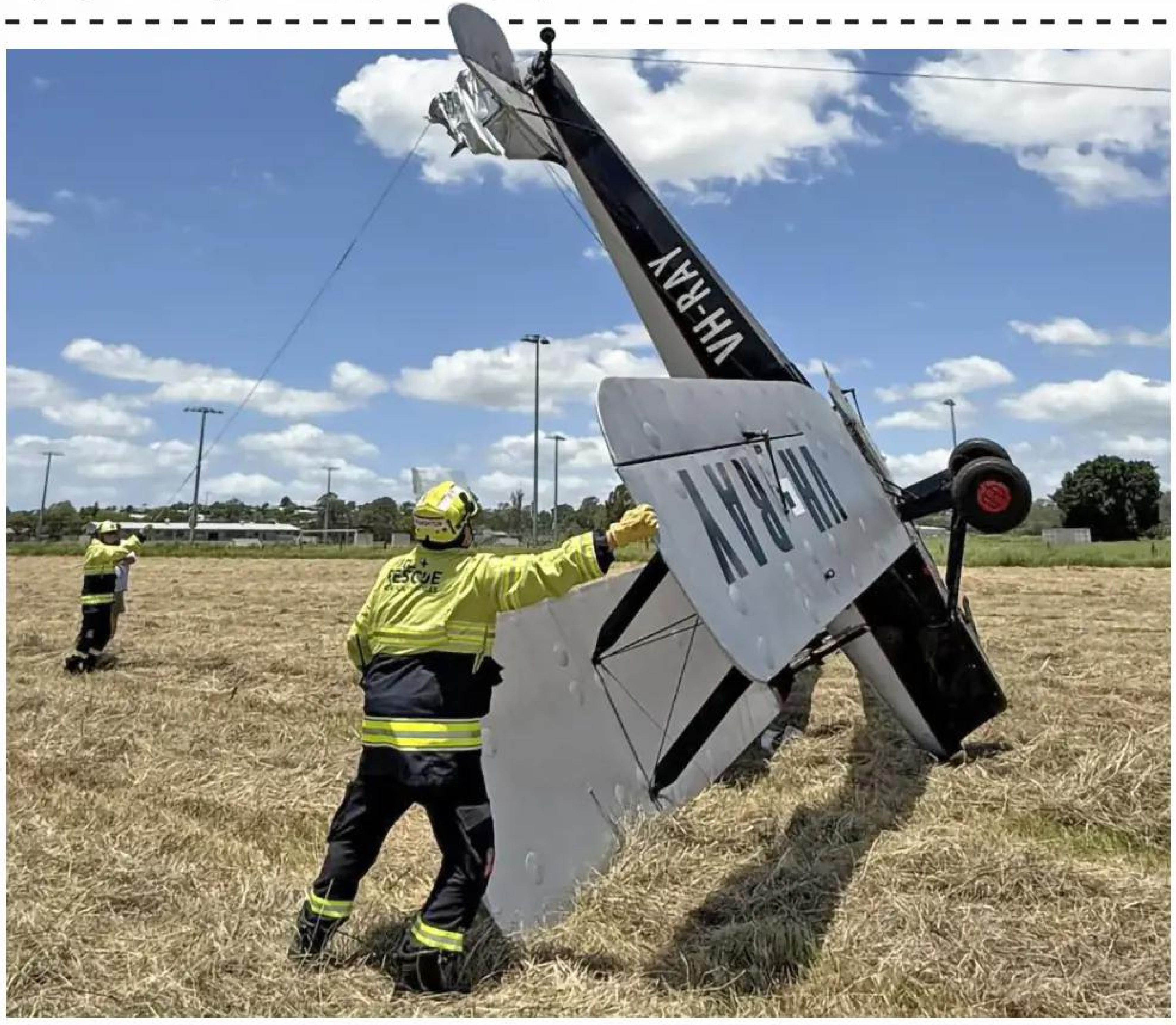
The E16A is now a permanent part of the Yamato Maritime Museum in Kure.



Damaged T-33A 53-905 will need a lot of work to bring it up to display condition.

T-BIRD EYESORE

There are still some military aircraft on display at VFW locations throughout the country and most of them are pretty sad. The VFW facility at Stoughton, Wisconsin, has a Lockheed T-33A Shooting Star and back on 2 December 2024 it was damaged after being hit by a semi-truck. The truck damaged the right wing and destroyed the tip tank so the VFW is looking for a replacement tank. They plan on repainting the plane and trying to bring it back up to display condition.



Fire crew lifts the inverted Moth.

TIGER ACCIDENT

On 30 November 2025, de Havilland DH.82A Tiger Moth registered VH-RAY was landing at South Grafton Airport in Australia when the pilot misjudged the runway and hit it with propeller first. The Tiger went onto its nose before going completely inverted. Damage to the 1939 biplane was substantial but the pilot escaped injury.

MYSTERY OF THE DOWNEY CORSAIR

A vintage article in a Long Beach, California, newspaper posed an interesting question regarding a Chance Vought Corsair. A reader wrote in an asked what had happened to the Corsair that the government donated to the city after the war. The newspaper did some investigating and found out that "It was kept at Long Beach Airport. Earle Lloyd, airport manager at the time, said he warmed the plane up regularly to keep it in shape until it ran out of fuel. He said it wasn't flown again although many veteran military pilots asked him to let them take it up once for old time's sake. It was finally given to nearby Downey and put in a city park for children to play on. According to a local historian, it was eventually junked because some of the kids were getting hurt climbing on it." We have never heard of this aircraft and it would be interesting if readers have photos of it either at the airport on in the Downey park. **AC**

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THE ILLUSTRIOUS COMBAT CAREER OF DAVID McCAMPBELL

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sadly, the American public tends to forget our heroes — especially the ones that laid their lives on the line in defense of freedom. Today, very few Americans recognize the name and exploits of David McCampbell. Instead, there is an unwholesome fascination with criminals and scumbags such as Jeffery Epstein. If you think an American aviation hero is being overlooked, please let us know and we will try to rectify the situation.

McCampbell was at the helm of the cruiser USS *Portland* when the ship sailed under the Golden Gate on the bridge's opening day.

David McCampbell at the beginning of WWII.

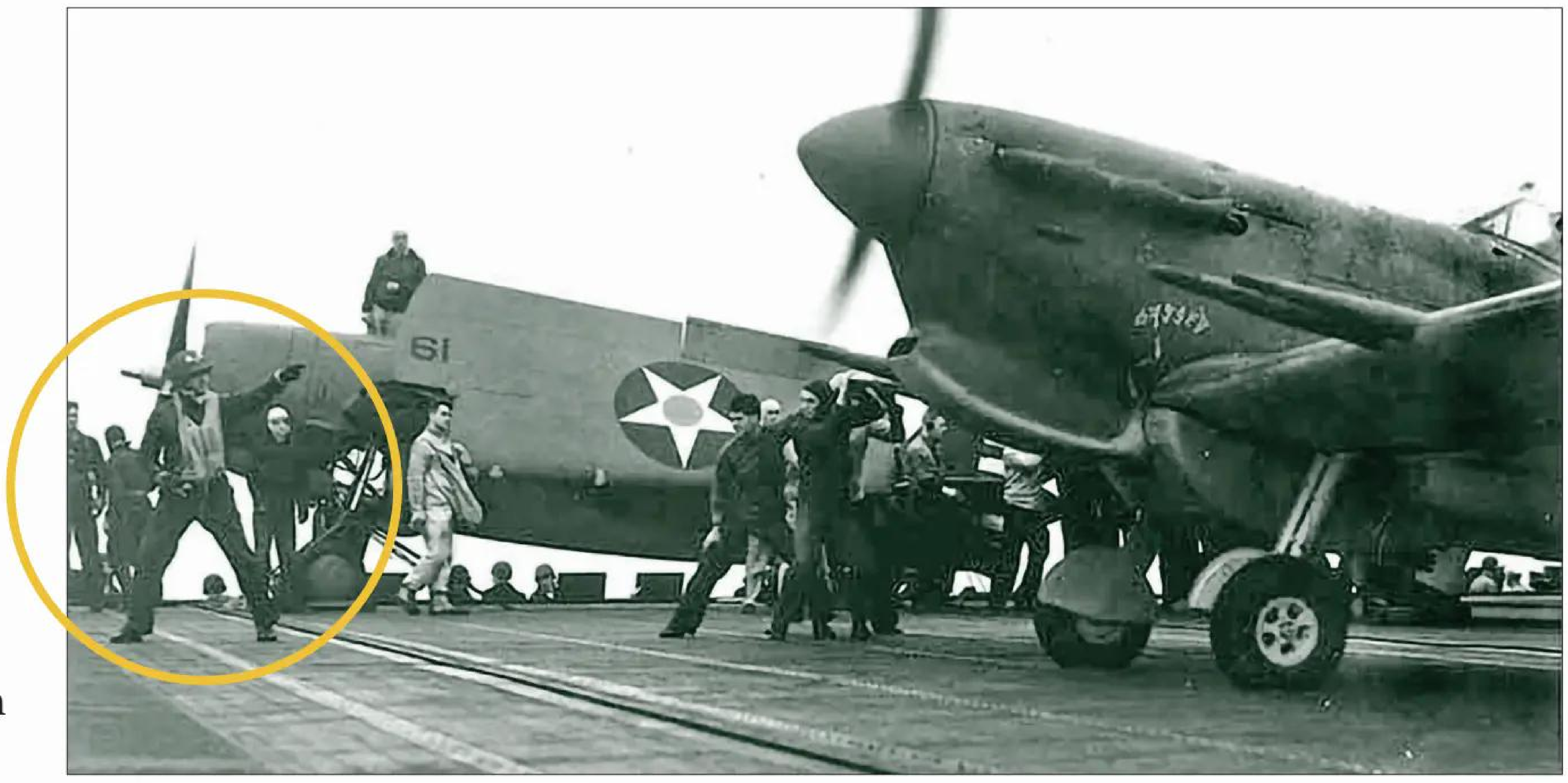
Being an "Ace-in-a-Day" is an exceptional accomplishment, but not entirely unheard of. Only one American, though, was an Ace-in-a-Day *twice*. This singular accomplishment earned David McCampbell the Medal of Honor. He would go on to become the Navy's Ace of Aces, with 34 total victories in WWII, the Navy's top Grumman F6F Hellcat ace, and the third highest scoring fighter pilot in the American military (the highest scoring were USAAF pilots Richard Bong and Thomas McGuire, neither of whom survived the war).

The events leading to McCampbell's Medal of Honor are summarized in his citation that was granted in January of 1945 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as commander Group 15, during combat against enemy Japanese aerial forces in the First and Second Battles of the Philippine Sea. An inspiring leader, fighting boldly in the face of terrific odds, Commander McCampbell led his fighter planes against a force of eighty Japanese carrier-based aircraft bearing down on our Fleet on19 June 1944. Striking fiercely in valiant defense of our surface force, he personally destroyed seven hostile planes during this single engagement in which the outnumbering attack force was utterly routed and virtually annihilated. During a major Fleet engagement with the enemy on 24 October, Commander McCampbell, assisted by but one plane, intercepted and daringly attacked a formation of 60 hostile land-based craft approaching our forces. Fighting desperately but with superb skill against such overwhelming airpower, he shot down nine Japanese planes and, completely disorganizing the enemy group, forced the remainder to abandon the attack before a single aircraft could reach the Fleet. His great personal valor and indomitable spirit of aggression under extremely perilous combat conditions reflect the highest credit upon Commander McCampbell and the United States Naval Service."

From the summary in the citation, it is clear the David McCampbell was among the best-of-the-best aviators. Surprisingly, however, today David McCampbell is virtually unknown. He deserves better from history, and *Air Classics* will do our part to champion the record of this incredible aviator.

David McCampbell was born on 16 January 1910 in Bessemer, Alabama, which was an iron manufacturing town located 18 miles south of Birmingham. The family moved to West Palm Beach,



McCampbell serving as LSO aboard the *Wasp* gets the ready signal from the pilot of an RAF Spitfire just before it took off to defend Malta on 9 May 1942 as part of Operation *Bowery*. The mission to supply the beleaguered island with new fighters probably saved the important outpost from being captured by the Germans.

McCampbell's *Minsi II* undergoing maintenance on the deck of the *Essex*.

Florida, where his father established a store with the Bessemer furniture company. His grandfather purchased a surplus US Air Service biplane in 1920, and that started McCampbell's fascination with aviation. In 1928, McCampbell graduated from the Staunton Military Academy in Virginia, where he lettered in swimming and diving. One of his classmates was a young man named Barry Goldwater from Arizona.

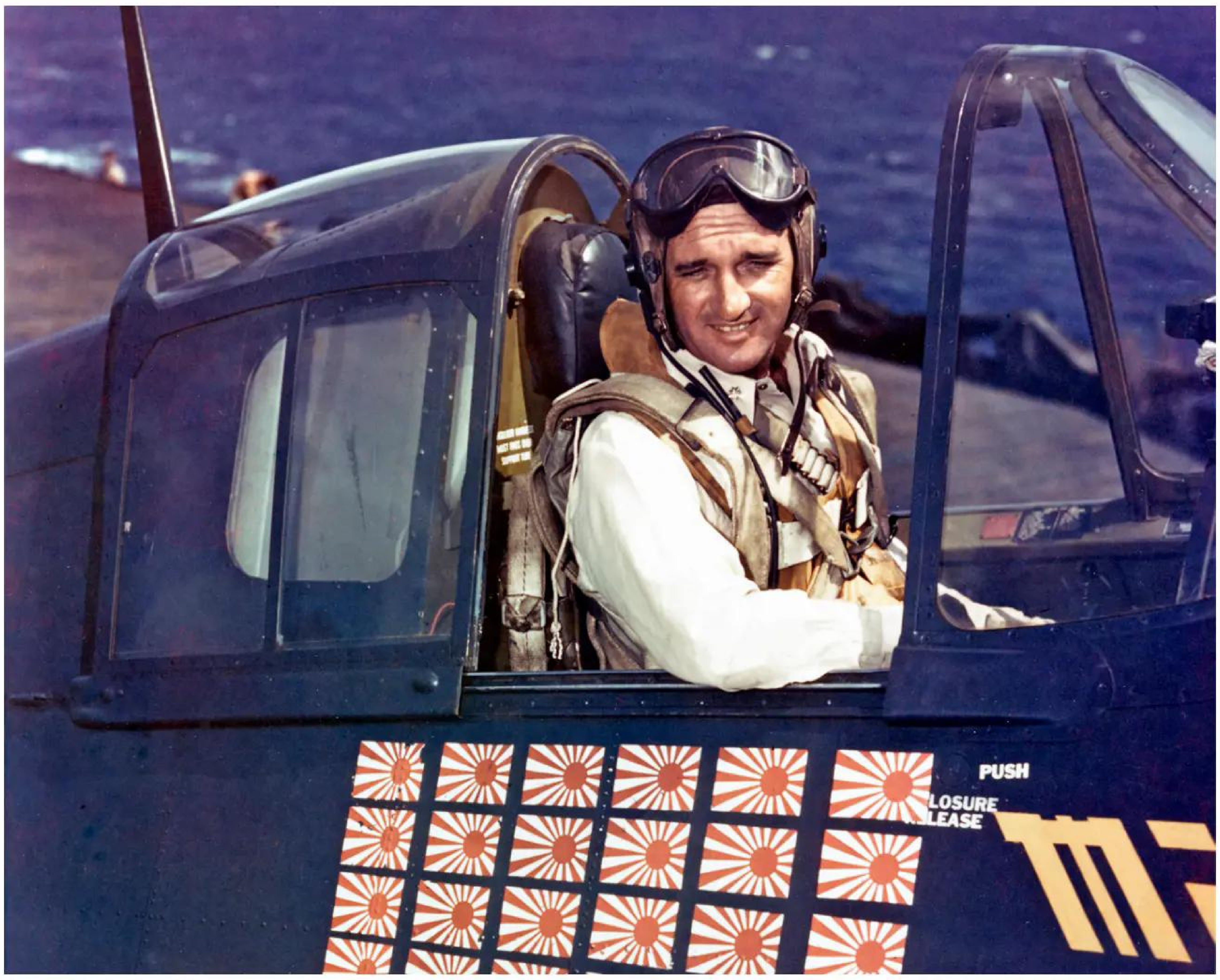
McCampbell attended Georgia Tech in Atlanta with a major in engineering, but the family furniture business failed soon after his arrival at school. McCampbell sought and obtained an appointment to the US Naval Academy in 1929 to relieve his family of any further tuition burden. He became an intercollegiate diving champion at the Naval Academy and graduated in 1933, in the bottom half of his class, with a degree in marine engineering. He received an honorable discharge from the Navy following graduation due to the deleterious effect of the ongoing Great Depression and he was commissioned as an Ensign in the US Naval Reserve on 1 June 1933.

He went on active duty on 14 June 1934 as a gunnery observer officer aboard the cruiser USS *Portland* (CA-33) in July 1936 and he personally piloted the ship under the Golden Gate Bridge during the celebration when the bridge opened on 27 May 1937. McCampbell started flight training at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, in June 1937 and became a Naval Aviator on 21 April 1938 at the top of his class. He was assigned to Fighter Squadron Four (VF-4) on the aircraft carrier USS *Ranger* (CV-4) in New York City. In May 1940, he served as the senior Landing Signal Officer (LSO) on the carrier USS *Wasp* (CV-7) out of Long Island, New York.

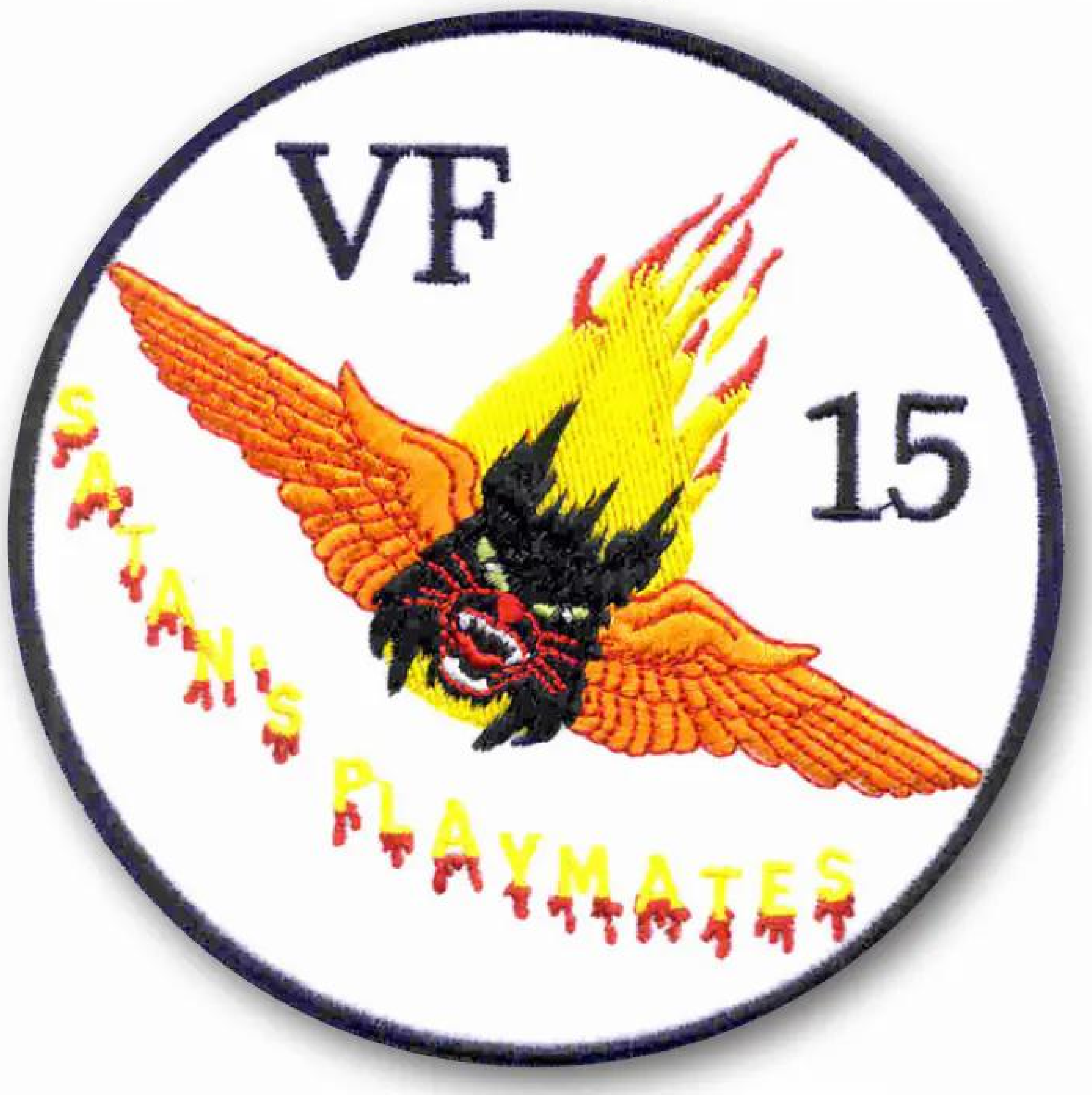
Following the Japanese strike on Pearl Harbor, the USS *Wasp* made two Mediterranean deliveries of Royal Air Force fighters to Malta, and then was sent to the South Pacific for service at Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands. On 15 September 1942, the *Wasp* was struck by Japanese torpedoes at

LSO Lt. McCampbell bringing in planes aboard the USS *Wasp* in early 1942.

McCampbell escaped from the burning *Wasp* after it had been struck by Japanese torpedoes.



Because of his combat fame, the Navy assigned a photographer to capture numerous images of McCampbell with Kodachrome film so we have some wonderful surviving images of the ace and his Hellcat.



Flight jacket patch for VF-15.

2:45 pm near Guadalcanal and, 35 minutes later, the order was given to abandon the burning and listing *Wasp* was abandoned. McCampbell jumped into the waters of the Pacific from the sinking ship and survived to be rescued. McCampbell was returned to the United States, promoted to lieutenant commander, and was stationed at NAS Melbourne, Florida, where he functioned as an LSO instructor until August 1943.

McCampbell formed Fighter Squadron 15 (VF-15 — also known as “Fabulous 15”) on 1 September 1943, and then was assigned as the Commander of Air Group 15 (CAG-15) from February through September 1944. Air Group 15 (fighters, bombers and torpedo-bombers) was embarked on the carrier USS *Essex*, where it participated in the First and Second Battles of the Philippine Sea. The first of which became known as the “Great Marianas Turkey Shoot,” and the second became known as the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

McCampbell’s first two air victories came on the 11th and 13th of June 1944 near Saipan when he shot down a Zero and a Nakajima Ki 49 Helen. On 15 June 1944, Marines landed on Saipan and the Marianas Islands. On 19 June 1944, V/Adm. Jisaburo Ozawa, commander of the Japanese fleet, ordered his forces to initiate battle with 750 army and navy aircraft in an attempt to hold the Marianas Islands. The US Navy used both surface and air patrols to monitor Japanese movements and sent up, along with the Marines, some 956 carrier-based aircraft to thwart the Japanese assault.

Commander McCampbell led a group of a dozen Grumman F6F Hellcats to 25,000-feet against 80 Japanese planes attacking the USS *Essex* and he shot down five Japanese Yokosuka D4Y Judy dive-bombers. The Judy was a potent aircraft against American ships and the Hellcat pilots went all out to destroy them. Later that afternoon, during a second sortie,

ABOARD THE WASP

THE ACE DESCRIBES RAF SPITFIRE ACTION ON THE AMERICAN CARRIER

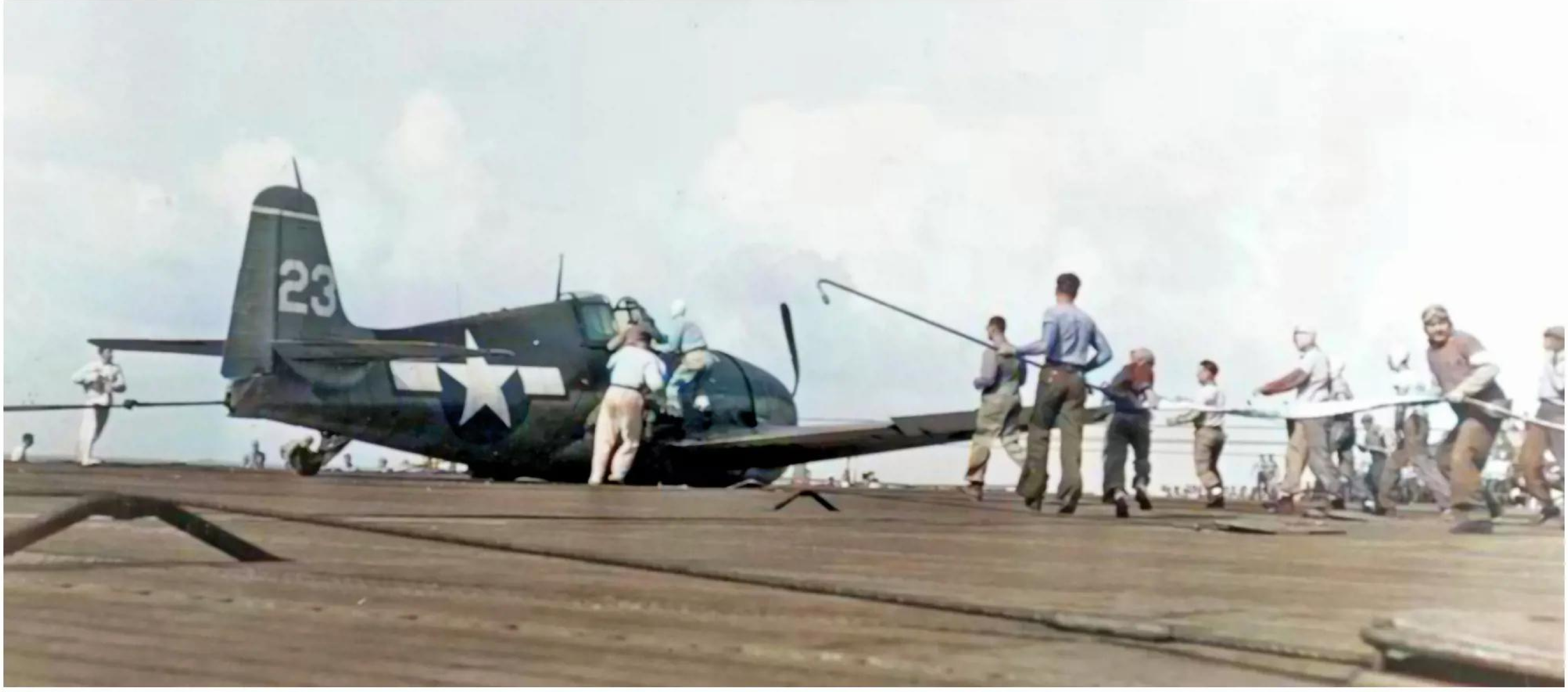
Pilot Officer Jerry Smith and L/Cmdr. McCampbell exchange caps after Jerry managed what is thought to be the world’s first Spitfire landing aboard a carrier. Smith was flying Spitfire RAF serial BR126 coded X-3.

Jerry Smith had lost his 90-gallon belly slipper tank from the Spitfire on takeoff. There was, therefore, no way that he was going to have enough fuel to reach Malta, nor could he make it back to Gibraltar. He had two choices – climbing up and bailing out and being picked up by a destroyer or going for a landing back aboard ship with no tailhook to stop him.

Fortunately, I had given all the Spitfire pilots a briefing before takeoff to acquaint them with the operations aboard ship. One of the things I told them was that during landing operations if anyone saw me jump into the air alongside my platform, he would know the plane coming in to land was in trouble and that was the signal for the pilot to go around again and make a new approach.

When Pilot Officer Smith decided to make his attempt at a landing without the tailhook, all our planes were in the air so we could give him the whole length of the flight deck. On the first approach he was much too high and too fast and when I found I couldn’t bring him down or slow him down enough for a landing, I simply jumped into the net. He got the news real fast and went around for a second approach.

As I got him to slow down and make his approach a little lower, I decided to give him the “cut” signal. He landed safely with his wheels just six feet short of the forward part of the flight deck. That night in the wardroom, we presented him with a pair of Navy wings.



Damaged in combat over Wake Island on 23 May 1944, VF-15 Lt. J.J. Collins brings his Hellcat in for a belly-landing on the *Essex*.

McCampbell shot down two Mitsubishi A6M Zeros over Guam.

On 20 October 1944, the Japanese initiated another battle, which became the largest naval battle in history and this is when the enemy began their use of *kamikaze* suicide attacks — something that came as a complete surprise to the American forces. On 24 October, McCampbell launched early from the USS *Essex*, after part of the Japanese fleet was spotted on the distant western horizon. The Navy pilot led the last seven Hellcat fighters from the carrier.

McCampbell and his wingman went high and the remaining five Hellcats flew lower against a force of 60 Japanese army and navy planes. McCampbell shot down an amazing seven Zeros and two Nakajima Ki-43 Oscars, while his wingman shot down another six enemy aircraft.

By this point, McCampbell was running short of fuel and needed to land. The deck of the *Essex* was not clear, so McCampbell landed his

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Everything down, a VF-15 Hellcat comes in for landing.

Another variation of a VF-15 flight jacket patch.

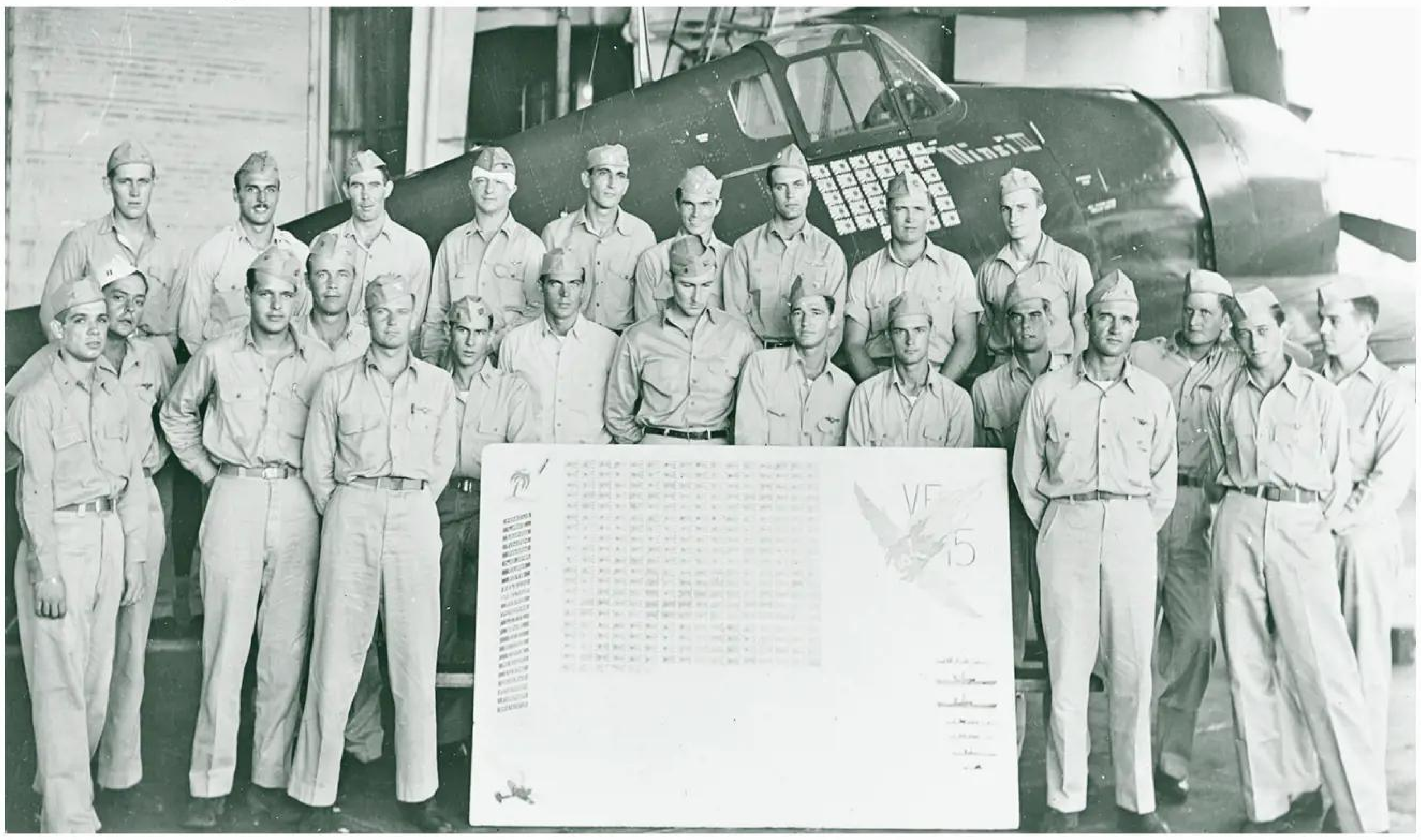
Hellcat on the light carrier USS *Langley* (CVL-27). "When I got over the *Essex*, I found they had a flight deck full of planes and to launch all those planes would take a good 20 minutes and I didn't have the fuel," the ace would later recall. His Hellcat had to be manually released from the arrestor wire, as the aircraft had reached complete fuel exhaustion. The aircraft's six Browning M2 .50-caliber machine guns only had six bullets remaining.

McCampbell's last two victories came on the 11th and 14th of November 1944, where he shot down an Oscar each day over the Philippines, for a grand total of 34 victories.

The ace returned as a hero to the United States in March 1945 and he went on to serve as the Chief of Staff to the Commander Fleet Air at Naval Air Station Norfolk, Virginia, until January 1947. He then held various officer, instructor and command positions, including command of the aircraft carrier USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31) from 1959-1960. He was assigned to the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon from 1960 to 1962. His final assignment was as Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations to the Commander in Chief, Continental Air Defense Command from September 1962 until his retirement on 1 July 1964. In addition to his Medal of Honor, McCampbell was awarded the Navy Cross, a Silver Star, a Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, and two Air Medals.

McCampbell referred to himself as "Dashing Dave" — possibly because he was married five times! A life-long chain-smoker, Dashing Dave stated that "if I'd known I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself."

David McCampbell died on 30 June 1996 in Riviera Beach, Florida, and he was interred at Arlington National Cemetery, one of the best-of-the-best, and the only American aviator to twice become an Ace-in-a-Day. **AC**



VF-15's top pilots aboard the *Essex* at the end of a six-month tour of duty in the Pacific that included the Battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf. Each pilot pictured had five or more victories and McCampbell is just to the right of the score card. His Hellcat *Minsi III* serves as a background.

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GENERAL BUD ANDERSON

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SO I BOUGHT AN
AIR FORCE
THE TRUE STORY OF A GRITTY MIDWESTERNER IN SOMOZA'S NICARAGUA
W.W. MARTIN

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It wasn't easy. There was lots of wheeling and dealing, getting the planes ready for the long flight, several crashes, but in the end Will achieved his goal and got the majority of these WWII veterans returned to the nation that made them.

SO I BOUGHT AN AIR FORCE has long been out of print. However, a new "hangar find" has uncovered several boxes of the first edition of this important book on Warbird history. These mint copies are the "last of the line!"

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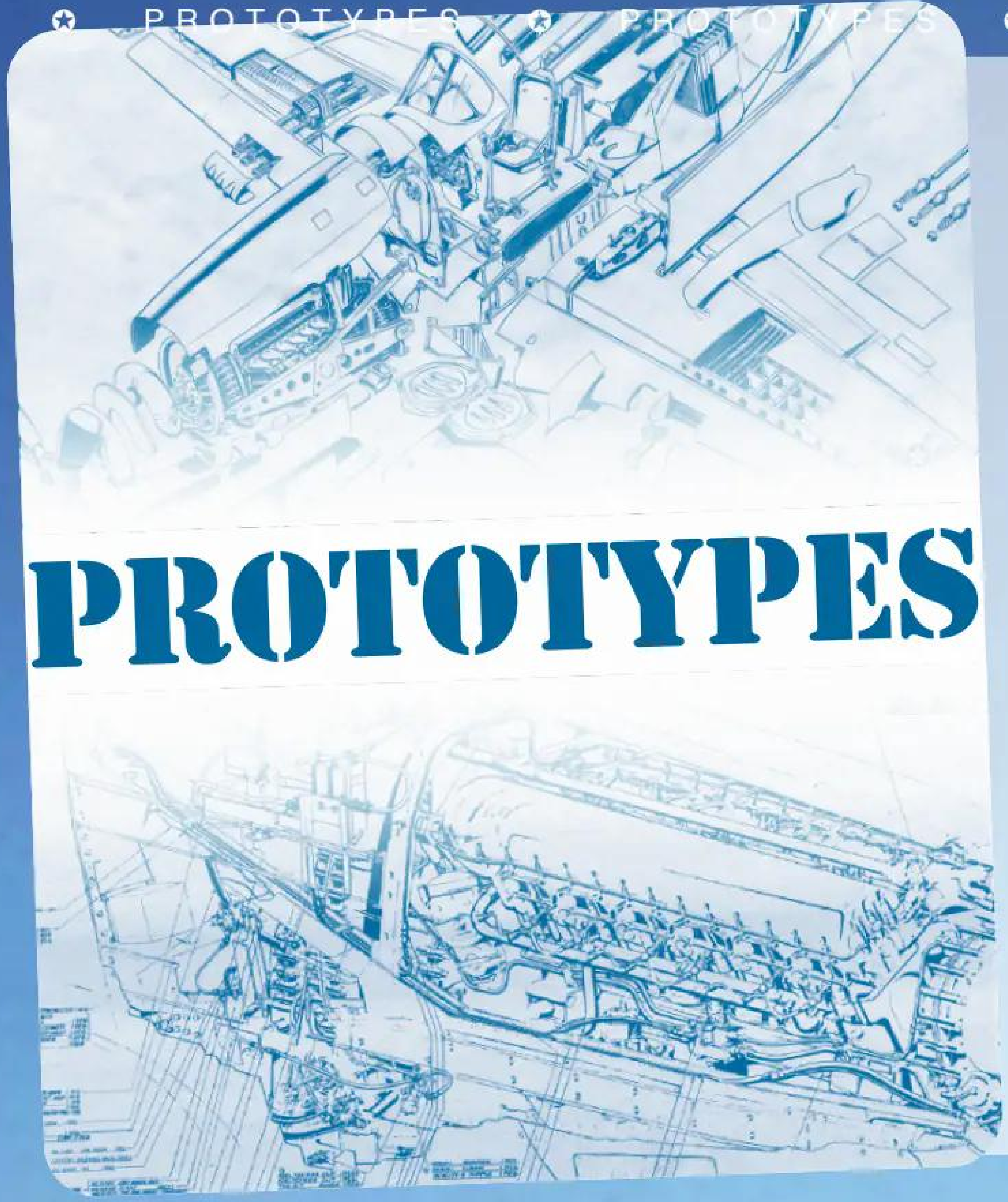
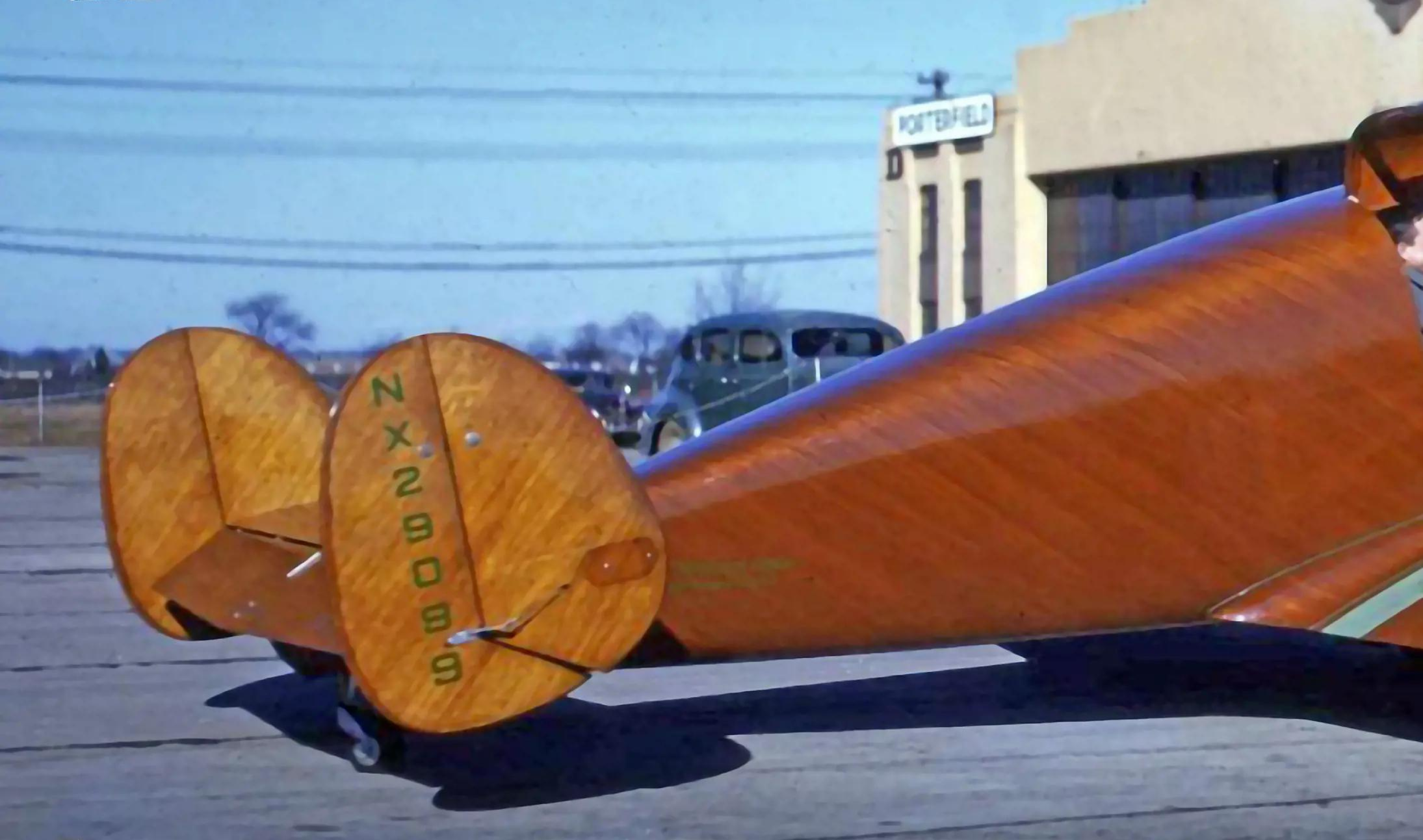


PROTOTYPES

"FLYING FURNITURE"

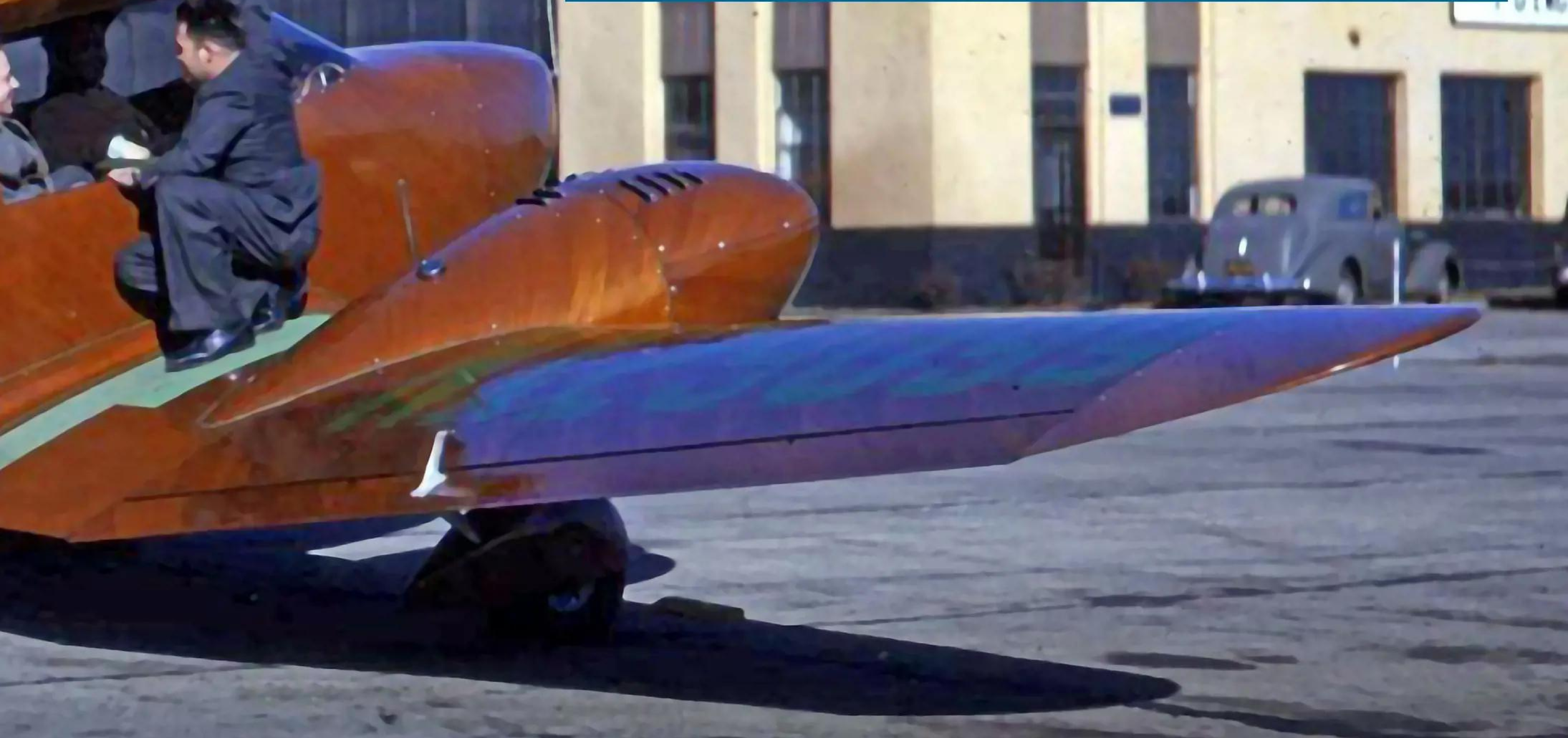
EVEN AS THE AERONAUTICAL WORLD WAS CHANGING TO ALL-METAL STRESSED-SKIN AIRCRAFT CONSTRUCTION, THERE WAS A MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES TO UTILIZE "PLASTIC WOOD" TO CREATE A NEW GENERATION OF FLYING MACHINES. WE EXAMINE THE LANGLEY TWIN AND SEVERAL OTHER AIRCRAFT THAT UTILIZED THIS METHOD OF BUILDING

BY MICHAEL O'LEARY



During the mid-1930s, a construction technique began to develop among several American aircraft builders. During the 1920s, Lockheed pioneered the use of wood in constructing very high-performance aircraft such as the Vega, Orion, and Sirius. Of course, wood had been a principal ingredient in aircraft construction beginning with the Wright Brothers but by the early 1930s, companies such as Lockheed were abandoning the tried-and-true method of wood construction in favor of creating even higher-performing aircraft out of aluminum. It was obvious that aluminum was the way of the future as these structures were more capable of withstanding the stress of prolonged high-speed flight and operation. However, wood aircraft construction certainly did have supporters and for very good reasons. There was also the fact that America had many more skilled wood workers than those trained in stressed-skin aluminum construction.

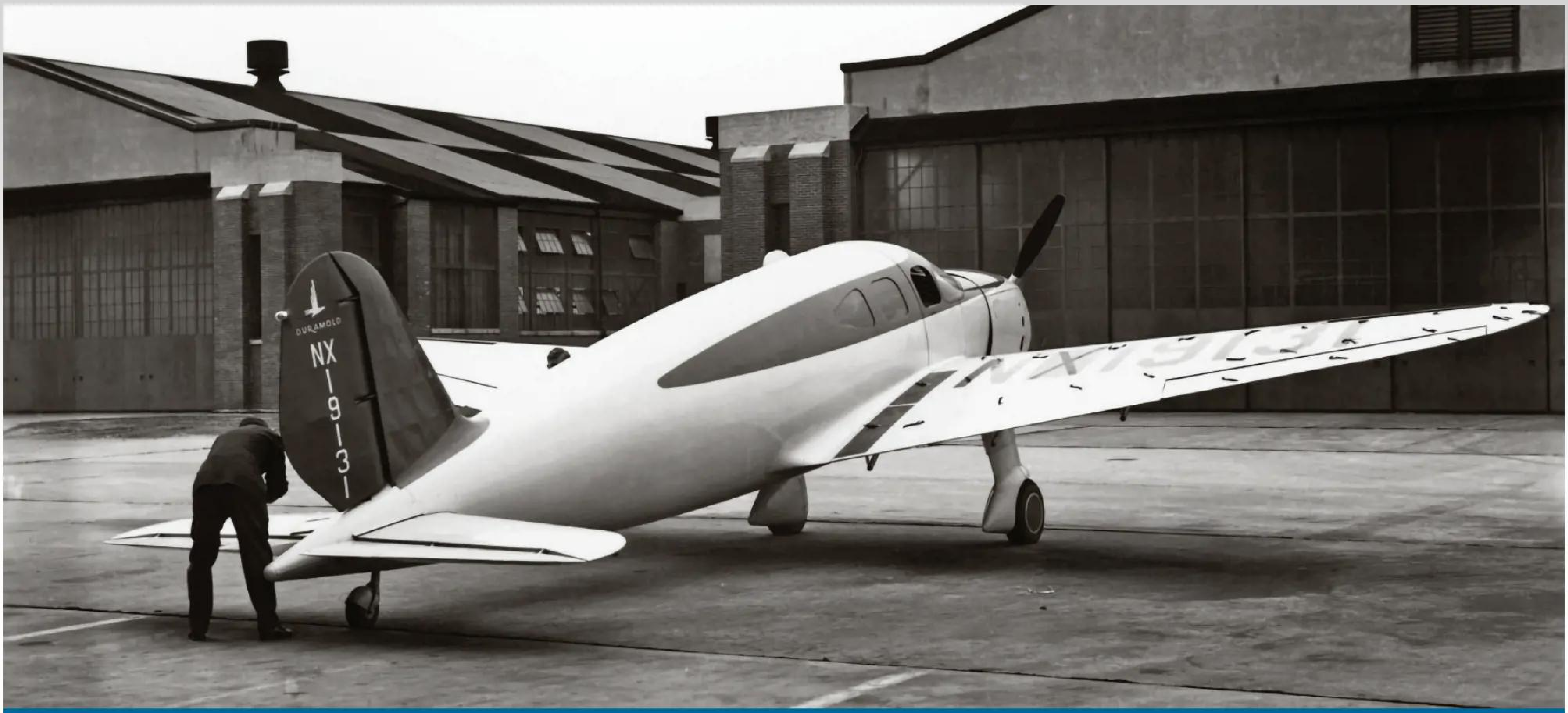
By the mid-1930s, there were numerous variants of plastic-impregnated wood products. Most of these utilized phenol formaldehyde (PF) resins but the techniques on how the products were created varied widely. Fairchild had the Duramold process and this had been developed by Col. Virginius E. Clark (who had created the Clark Y airfoil) and it was used on the company's Model 46, AT-21 Gunner, and other aircraft. Eugene Vidal (whose son was the controversial novelist Gore Vidal) created the Vidal-Weldwood



The prototype Langley 2-4-65 photographed by Rudy Arnold in 1941 shortly after completion. As can be seen, the aircraft carries the experimental registration NX29099. The wooden skin was repeatedly sanded and varnished for an exceptionally smooth finish, which aided performance. One aviation magazine of the time period referred to the all-wood design as a "fine piece of flying furniture."

Martin Jensen (left) and Paul Schluter would come in at second place in the infamous 1927 Dole Air Derby flying the Breese monoplane named *Aloha*.

Process and this was used for the developmental XBT-11 basic trainer along with the Summit HM-5 two-seat light aircraft registered NX25332 (and the first plane to be constructed entirely from the Vidal-Weldwood Process). It was similar to Fairchild's Duramold in that both used heat-activated synthetic PF resins to bond birch veneers while pressure molds shaped the plywood. The Weldwood Process molded fuselage stiffeners and skin in one step. In Canada, the Avro Anson Mk. V used the Vidal-Weldwood Process. At Metropolitan Airport in Van Nuys, California, Otto Timm devised Aeromold to build his PT-160/N2T-1 primary trainers. Timm stamped out parts-shaped blanks of flat spruce veneers (using dies and heated presses). At the Timm factory, the pieces were then assembled, impregnated with cold-setting PF resin, and vacuum-bag pressure-formed. The Timm Aeromold process was interesting since it required lower temperatures than other similar construction processes. The vacuum molding process was completed at 100-degF. Once the parts were set, they were removed from the autoclave, assembled into components and then further baked at 180-degF to fully harden. Supposedly, the Aeromold Process resulted in the smoothest skin among molded-plywood components. (As an aside, when I was a high school senior in southern California I had gotten my driver's license and would often go to Van Nuys Airport. A lot of the area was still agricultural and a few miles from the airfield I saw



Numerous other companies created molded wood aircraft including Fairchild who used their Duramold process for the Fairchild Model 46, which also served as a testbed for the company's inverted Ranger V-12 powerplant. The fuselage was built of Duramold while the wings were standard wooden construction. The Duramold Process was refined by Fairchild and Haskelite Manufacturing. With its right wing tufted, the aircraft was photographed during NACA testing. During the 1980s/1990s, this aircraft was staked outside at several southern California airfields and the wooden structure began to rot. Today, the remains are under static restoration at Western Antique and Automobile Museum.

some fellows restoring a Stinson AT-19 in a farm building. I stopped to look at the project and then noted that the sagging wooden buildings were filled with bright yellow aircraft components. I asked about them and was told they had purchased the entire surplus inventory of Timm N2T-1 spare parts. I can attest to the fine finish and smoothness of the parts. I wonder what happened to the treasure-trove of Timm parts but they probably wound up in a fireplace.) Then, of course, there was the mighty Howard Hughes HK-1 Hercules. It seems Howard had purchased partial rights to the Duramold Process and this was further developed after V.E. Clark was put on the Hughes' payroll. (Our in-house company museum has several Hercules components and the parts are as smooth and strong as they day they were made.) When Vultee feared an aluminum shortage for its massive production of BT-13 Valiant basic trainers, company designers created a rear fuselage and side panels made out of molded wood but this was a limited production and was dropped when the supply of aluminum became assured.

Fairchild developed the Duramold Process for mass production of the company's AT-21 Gunner crew trainer.

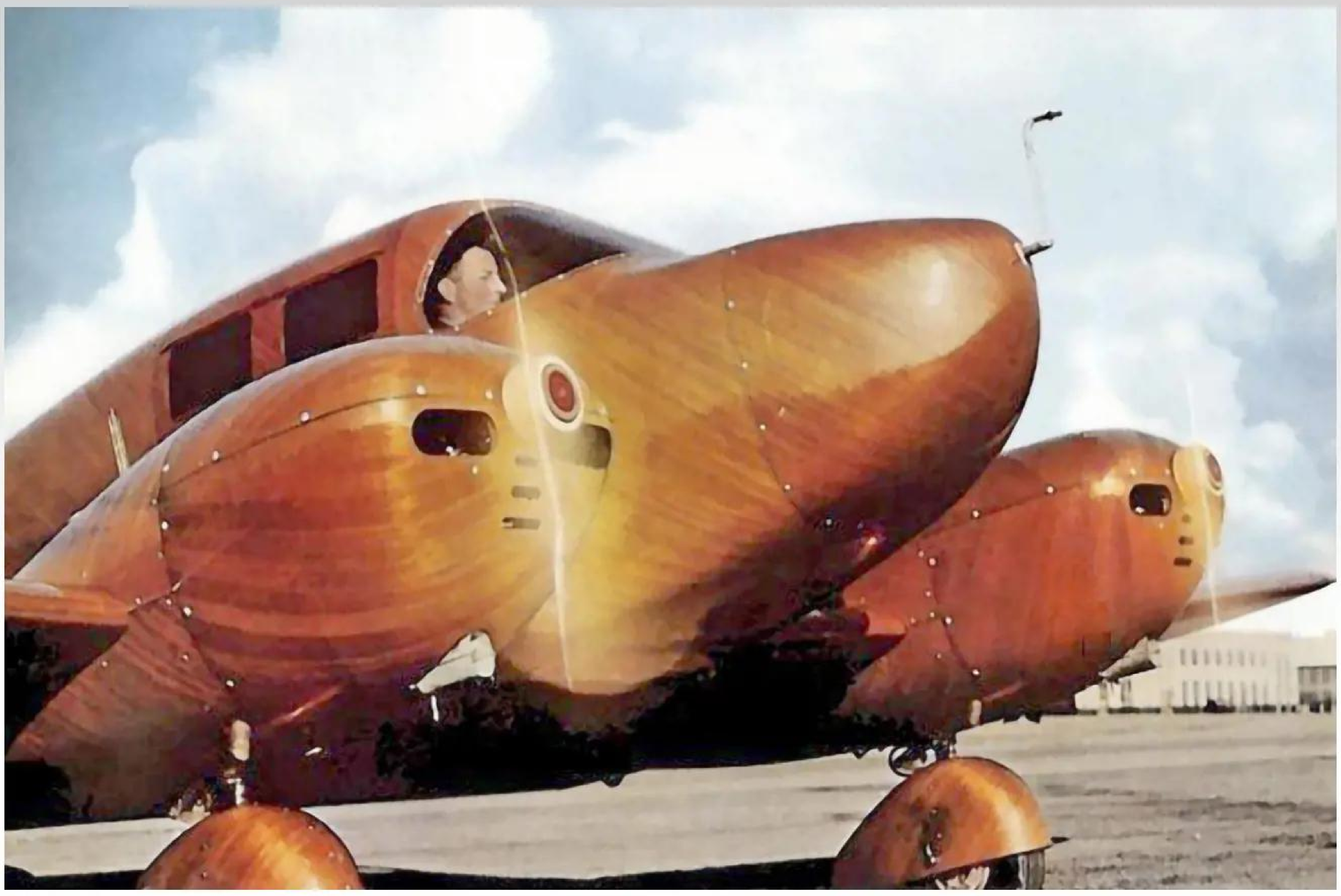
Then we come to the subject of this article: The Langley Twin 2-4-65. Who would this design appeal to and were marketing surveys undertaken to determine if there were any actual potential buyers? We must remember that the country was mainly still in the grips of the Great Depression although orders from foreign markets for combat aircraft and military equipment were greatly aiding the growing American aviation industry. It seems that the Langley was designed and created as an efficient, lower-cost, twin-engine aircraft that could be used by business flyers and, perhaps, for multi-engine training. As configured, it would carry a pilot and three passengers in its cabin. To maintain simplicity, the gear would be fixed with the main wheels enclosed in streamlined fairings.

Design of the Langley Twin is attributed to Martin Jensen and that is a name that should be familiar to the readers of this publication. Jensen had joined the Navy during the Great War and then learned to fly and became an itinerant post-war barnstormer. He established a flying school in San Diego, California, and in 1925 competed in a coast-to-coast race while piloting an OX-5-powered biplane. Jensen is perhaps best-known as being the pilot of the Breese monoplane (designed by test pilot Vance Breese, who would later make the first flight of the North American NA-73X, the prototype Mustang) named *Aloha* that he would fly (along with master navigator Paul Schulter) to a second-place finish in the infamous August 1927 Dole Derby air race from Oakland, California, to Wheeler Field in Hawaii. Jensen finished the race one-hour and 58-minutes after the winning Travel Air *Woolaroc* touched down. Second place was also last place as all the other contestants either crashed or disappeared along the race route. Also that same year, Jensen flew a modified Ryan Brougham whose fuselage had been converted into a cage for "Leo, the MGM Lion." This was a publicity stunt to fly the lion to major cities from California and New York where the studio would display the lion at their theaters. Unfortunately, the Ryan crashed in Arizona and while Jensen and the lion were eventually rescued, the enterprise came to an end.

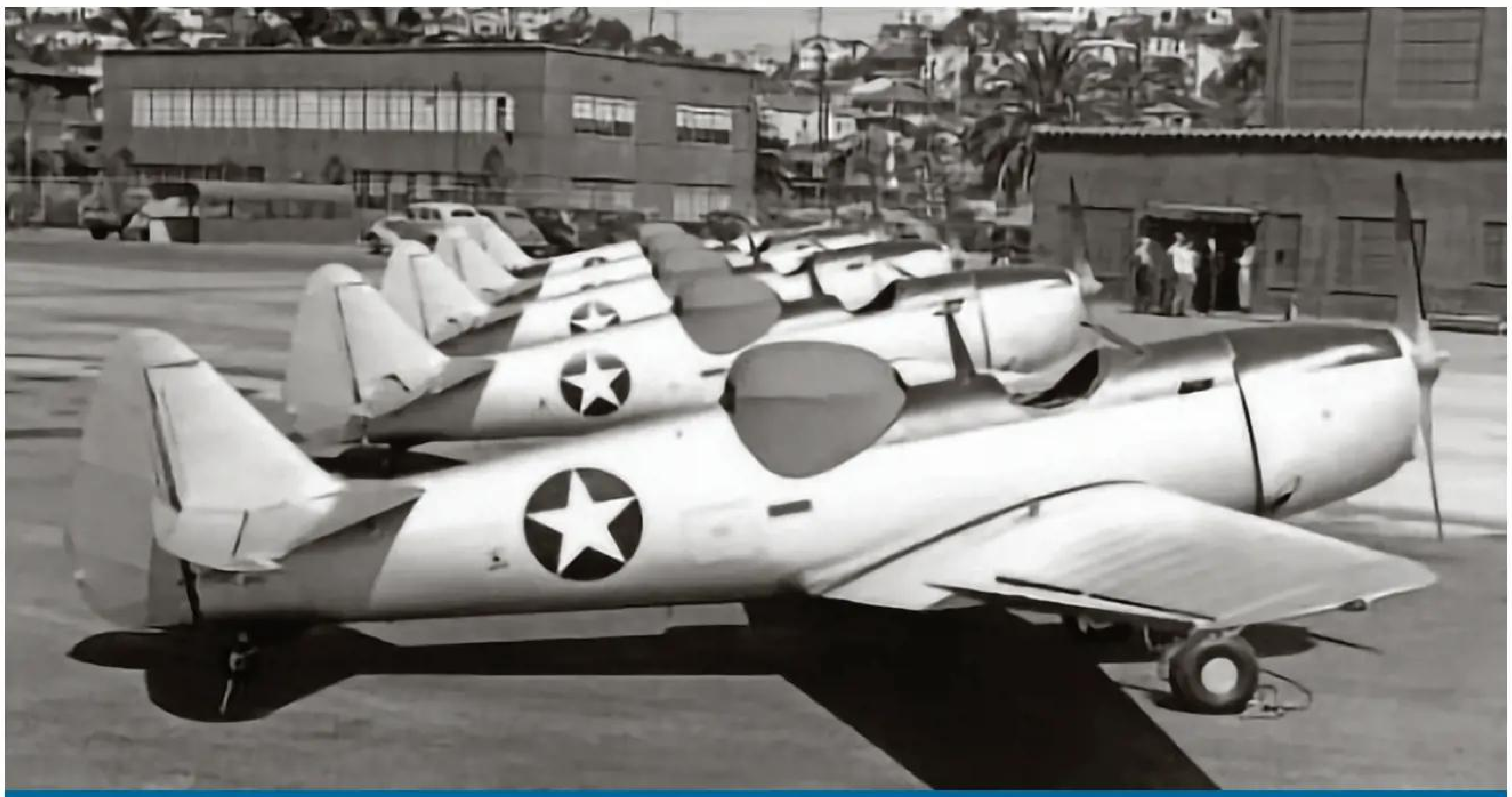
After that event, Jensen achieved a degree of fame and continued his barnstorming around the country while also working for several aviation companies. He established the Jensen Aircraft Corporation and designed and built an aircraft called the Jensen Trainer but the 1929 stock market crash and following Great Depression caused the company to fold. After that, he taught aeronautics in a Pennsylvania college and in 1935 went to work for the Langley Aircraft Company, becoming vice-president of the small organization. The company was located in Port Washington, New York, and Jensen worked under the engineering direction of Arthur R. Draper to create the "Langley Process," in which layers of Honduran mahogany would be fused using plastic resin under heat and pressure. Reportedly, the name of the company honored pioneering aeronautical researcher Samuel Pierpont Langley.

With the Langley Process, thin strips of mahogany would be treated with a plastic resin and then molded into an integral unit comprising the aircraft's structure and skin. The new aircraft design created by Jensen and Draper was called the Langley 2-4-65 but was often referred to simply as the "Langley Twin." The 2-4-65 designation stood for two motors, four people, and 65-hp for each Franklin engine. To create the airframe, strips of the wood ranging from 1/64th-inch to 1/8th-inch thickness were placed onto a mold and the permanently bonded into a single structure utilizing plastic resins that reacted to heat and pressure. This method of construction also resulted in a relatively light structure that was extremely smooth. The fuselage of the 2-4-65 along with the wings, control surfaces, and even cowlings were stated as being joined together without the use of metal fastenings such as nuts, bolts, or screws.

The molds themselves were made

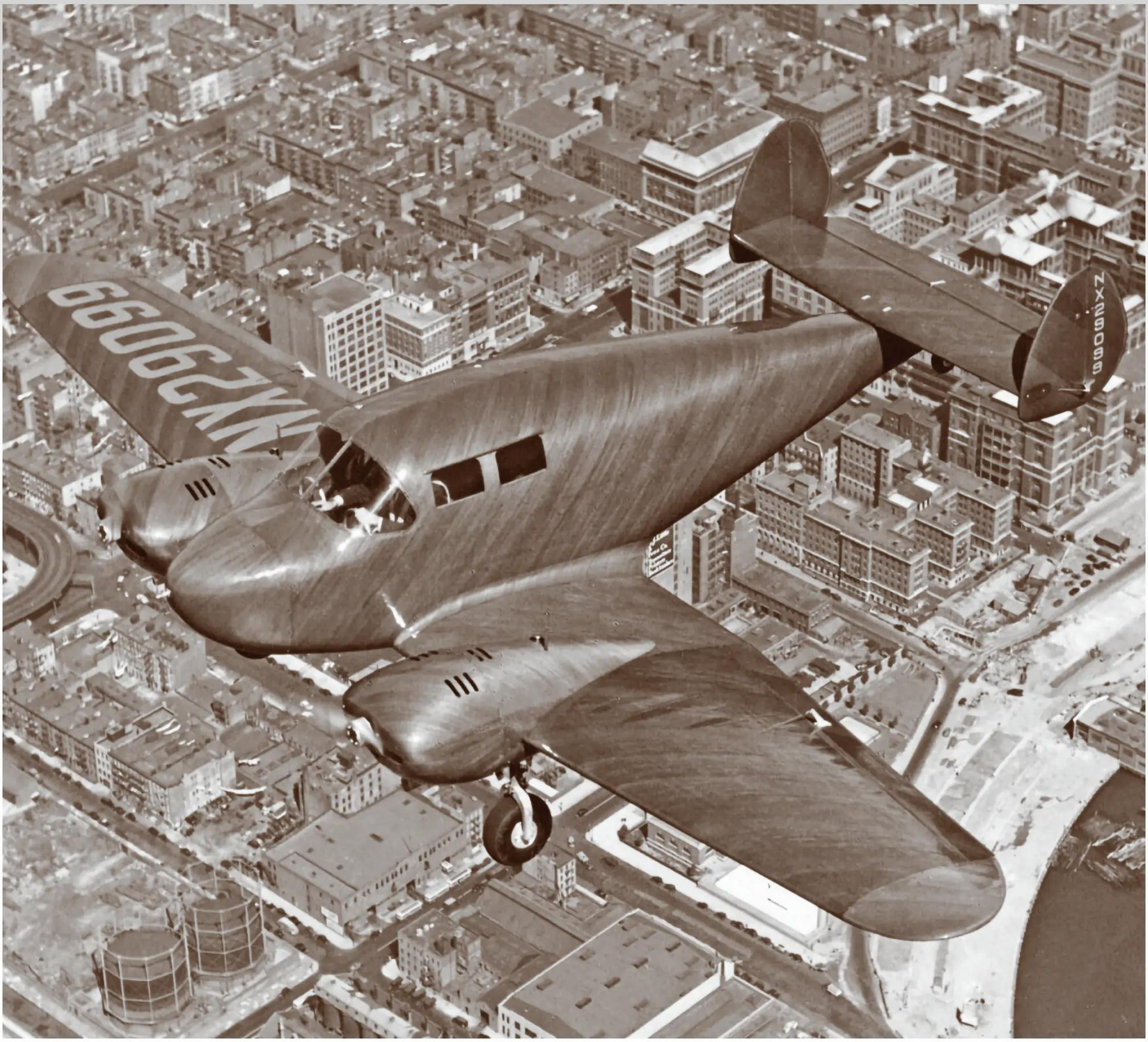


Close-up of the prototype Langley 2-4-65. Even though company literature states that no metal fasteners were utilized, it does appear that some sort of metal screws were employed in the cowling.



Ryan also tried its hand at producing plastic-impregnated wood aircraft with the YPT-25. The type was not a success and just five were completed. The aircraft are seen with the instrument flying covers raised over the rear cockpit.

OVERLEAF: **With its highly-varnished mahogany finish gleaming in the late New York afternoon sun, this Rudy Arnold photograph was probably taken prior to the prototype's first flight. Entry to the cabin, which was relatively spacious given the aircraft's small size, was via a large hatch on the right side of the fuselage.**

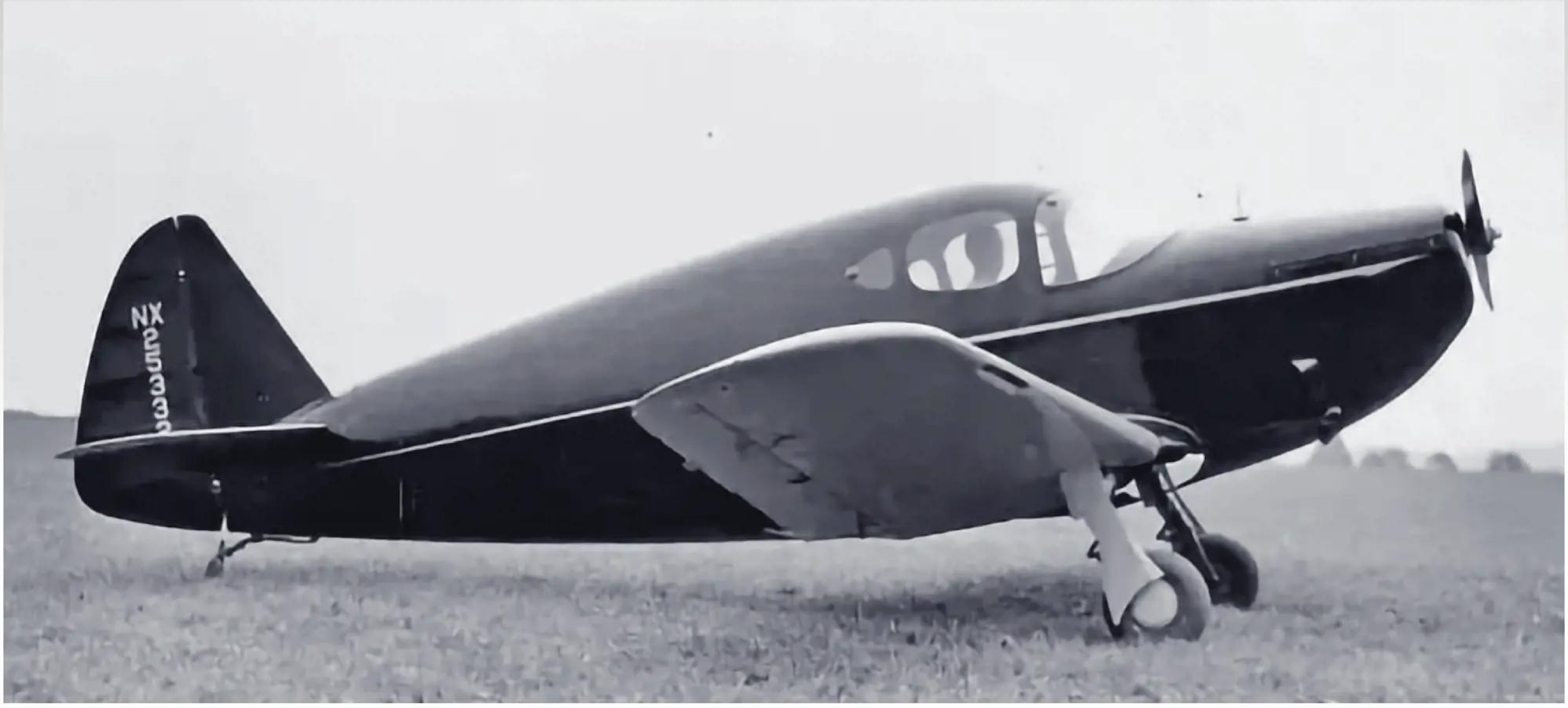


Early aerial view of the prototype over New York City. At this point, the aircraft was not fitted with the large main wheel fairings.

SPECIFICATIONS LANGLEY 2-4-65 (2-4-90)

Span	35-ft 2-in	(same)
Length	20-ft 8-in	(same)
Height	7-ft 1-in	(same)
Empty Weight	1410-lbs	(1560-lbs)
Gross Weight	2300-lbs	(2450-lbs)
Fuel	40-gal	(N/A)
Max Speed	135-mph	(166-mph)
Cruise Speed	125-mph	(148-mph)
Landing Speed	46-mph	(48-mph)
Climb	644-fpm w/full load	(1130-fpm)
Range	400-mi	(600-mi)
Ceiling	13,300-ft	(18,500-ft)
Powerplants	Franklin 4A 65-hp	(Franklin 4AC-199-E3 90-hp)

***NOTE:** *Performance figures have been taken from vintage publications and should not be viewed as completely accurate.*

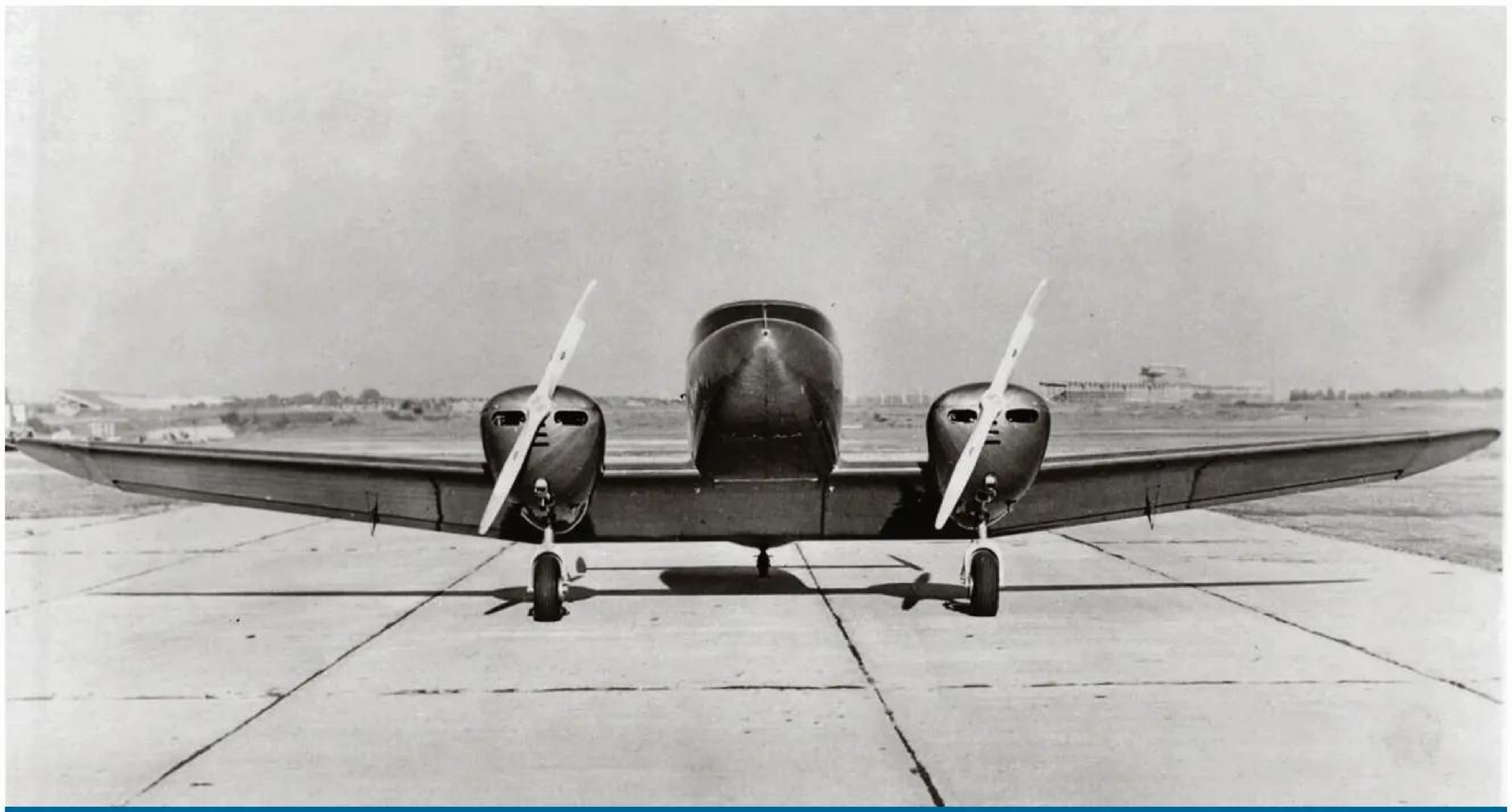


Designed by Howell Miller (who worked on the Gee Bee racers) for Summit Aeronautical Corporation in Springfield, Massachusetts, the HM-5 was a two-seat general aviation aircraft manufactured utilizing the Vidal-Weldwood Process.

out of wood and were relatively simple. The strips of prefabricated wooden veneer were placed diagonally over each other onto the forms and then left to dry. On the mold, components as large as a half-fuselage were the placed into a bag made from rubberized fabric. Each veneer layer was sealed with the plasticized resin so that the grains of the wood were at right angles to each other. All air was sucked from the rubberized bags and the components were then placed in a heated pressure chamber where they remained for 60 minutes or less.

Removed from the molds, each component of the structure was relatively simple while also being easy to inspect. The company stated that the completed aircraft would be cheap to maintain and service. In a contemporary article, Jensen noted that the plywood had proven to be exceedingly flame resistant but it would have been interesting to know what tests the wood was put through to come to that conclusion. In a really unusual move, the cowls and firewalls were also of the molded wood but they also had an asbestos lining. The cowls, wing tips, and nose of the aircraft were all designed to be easily removable.

There is not a huge amount of surviving information on the Langley aircraft but a second prototype was built with the designation 2-4-90 and the last figure referred to the fact



Head-on view of the Langley 2-4-65 shows the streamlined nature of the design.

338
320
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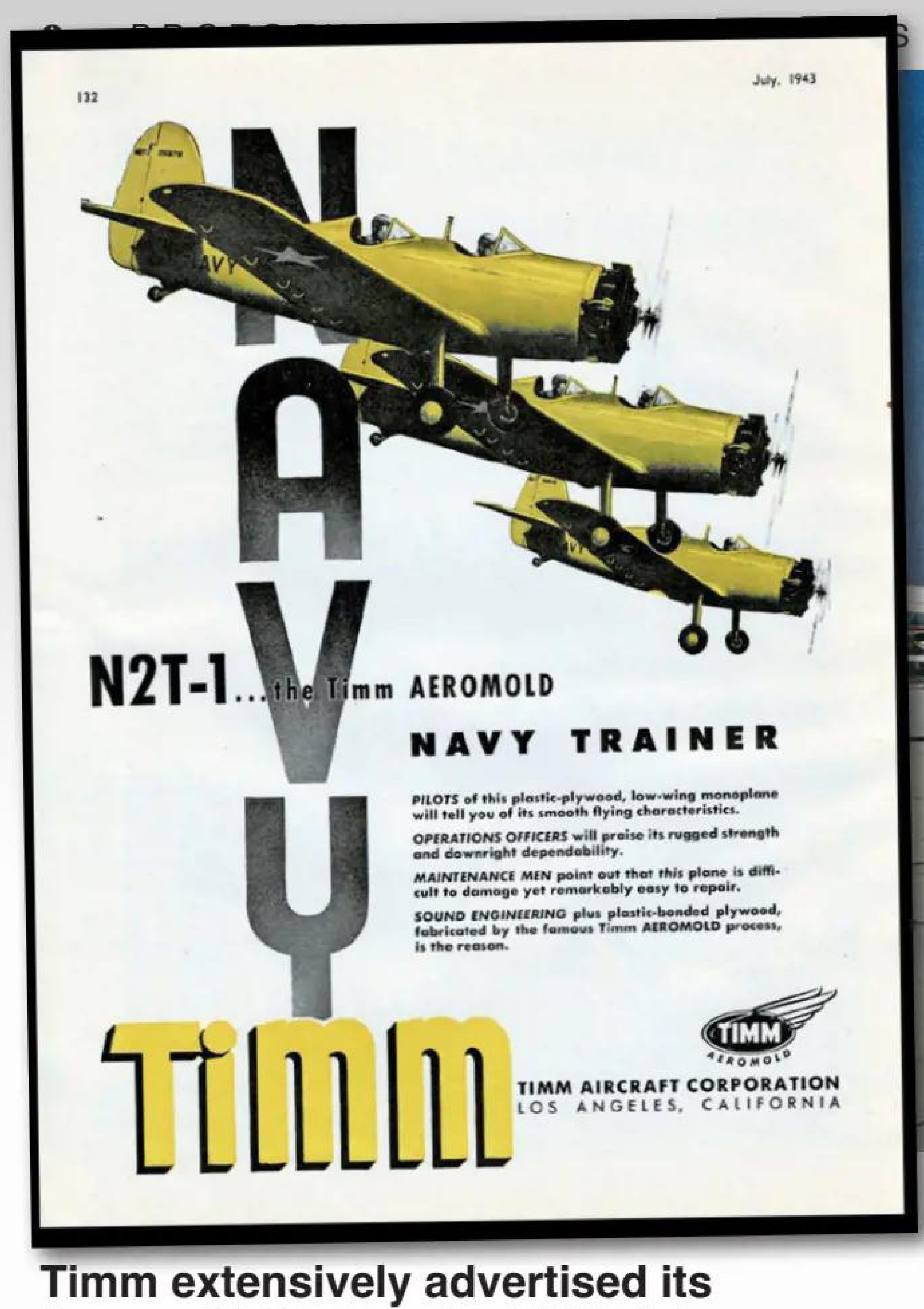
Rare formation shot of US Navy Timm N2T-1 Tutors in flight. The Navy procured around 270 of these aircraft but they were not a great success. However, they were one of the largest production runs of aircraft constructed from plasticized wood , in this case the Aeromold Process.



132

July, 1943

NAVY

N2T-1... the Timm AEROMOLD

NAVY TRAINER

PILOTS of this plastic-plywood, low-wing monoplane will tell you of its smooth flying characteristics.

OPERATIONS OFFICERS will praise its rugged strength and downright dependability.

MAINTENANCE MEN point out that this plane is difficult to damage yet remarkably easy to repair.

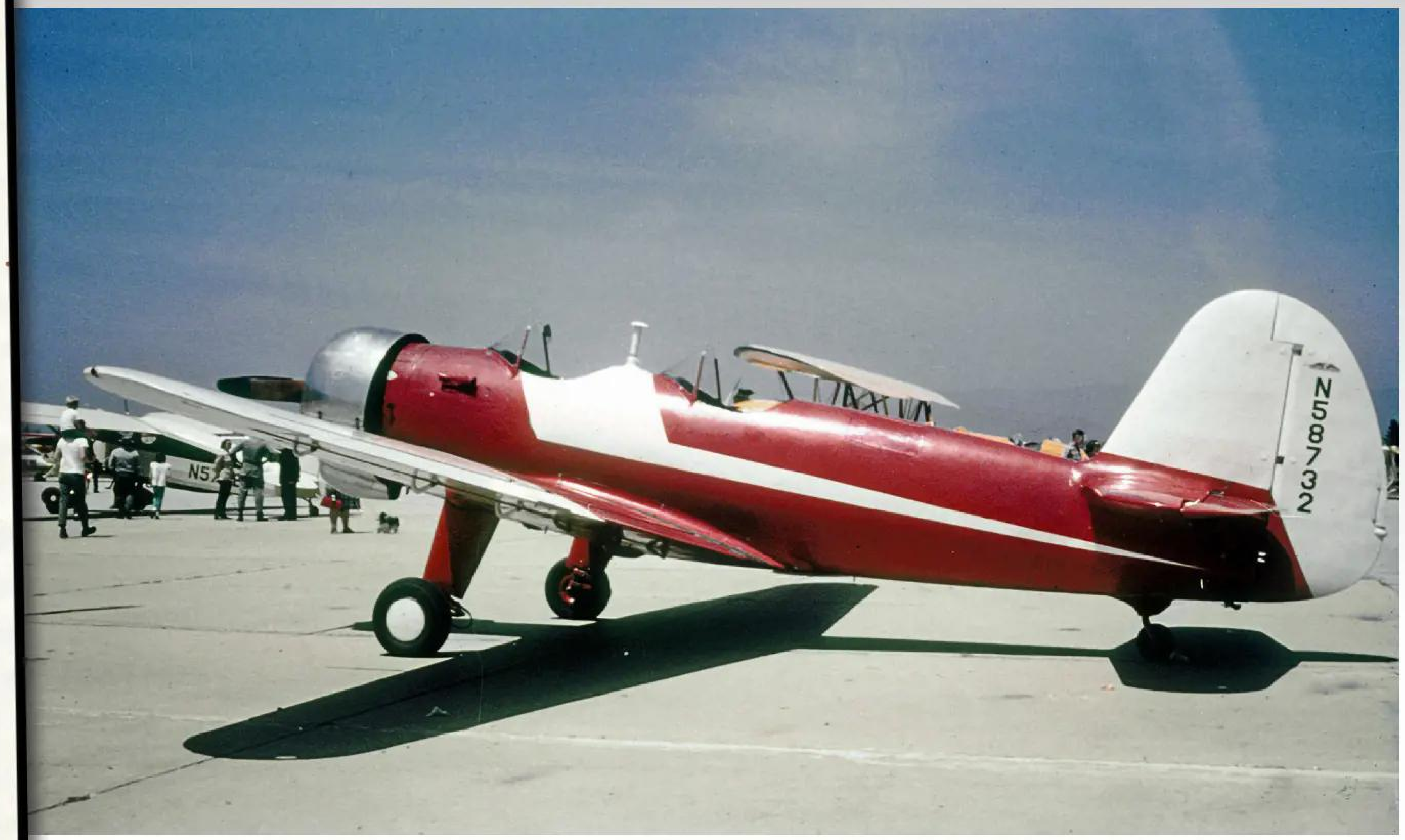
SOUND ENGINEERING plus plastic-bonded plywood, fabricated by the famous Timm AEROMOLD process, is the reason.

TIMM

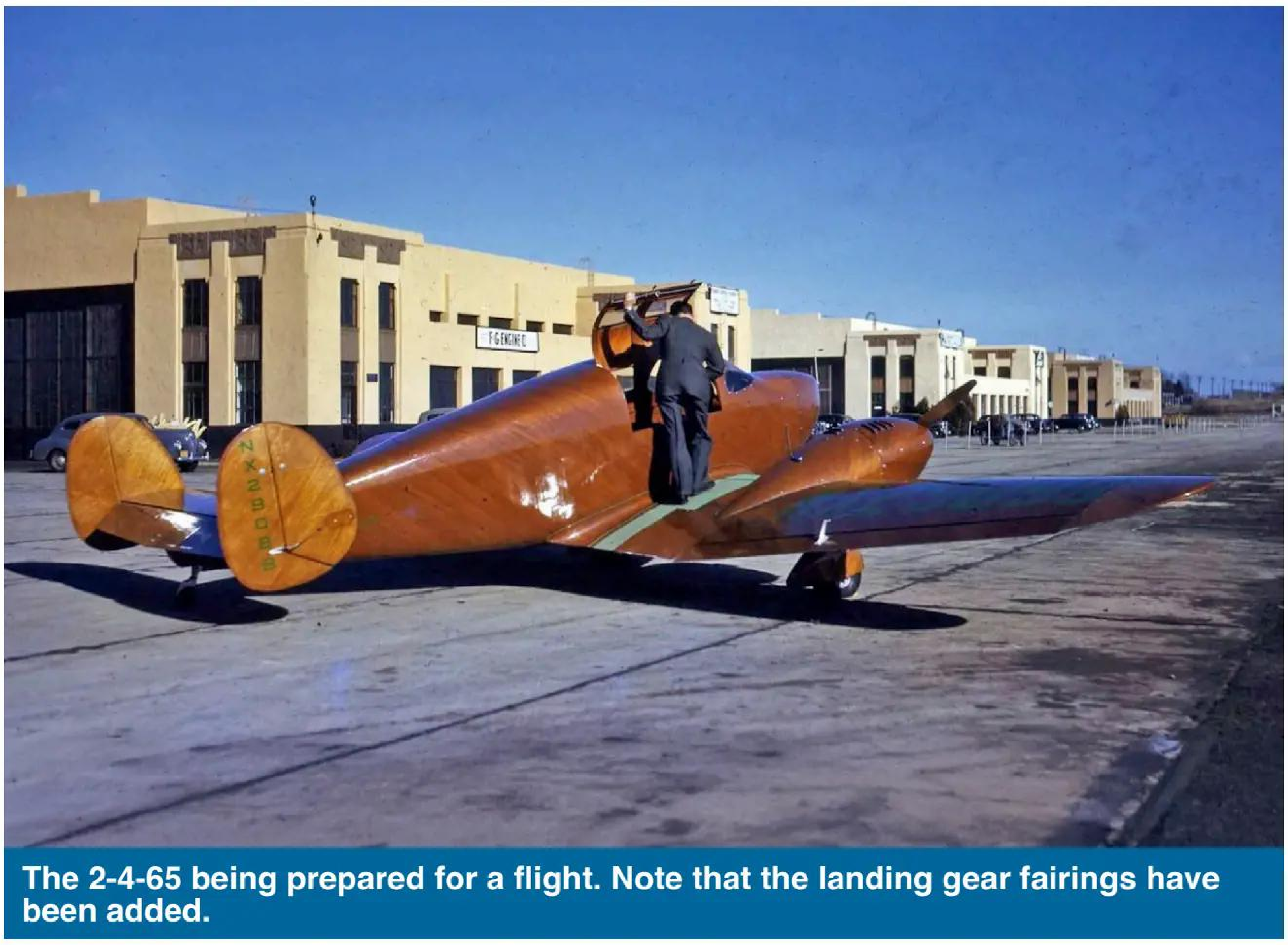
TIMM AEROMOLD

TIMM AIRCRAFT CORPORATION
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

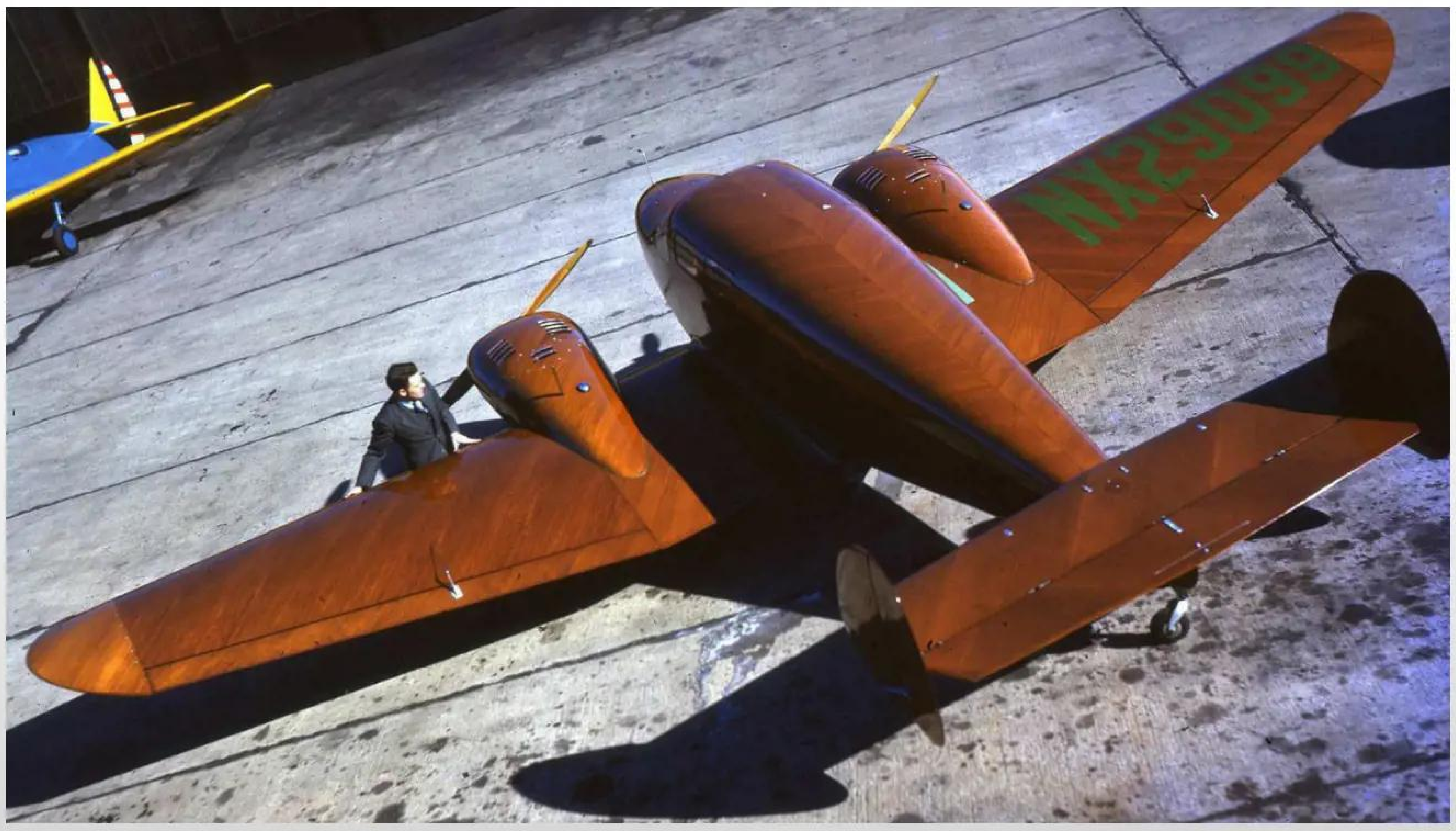
Timm extensively advertised its Aeromold Process but little future use was made of the material.



Numerous N2T-1s were sold on the surplus market. N58732 received a few customizing touches such as an engine cowl and landing gear fairings. Most of these aircraft were kept outside and their condition quickly went downhill. This example survived to receive a US Navy all-yellow training scheme and it is now on display at the National Museum of Naval Aviation as a rare survivor.



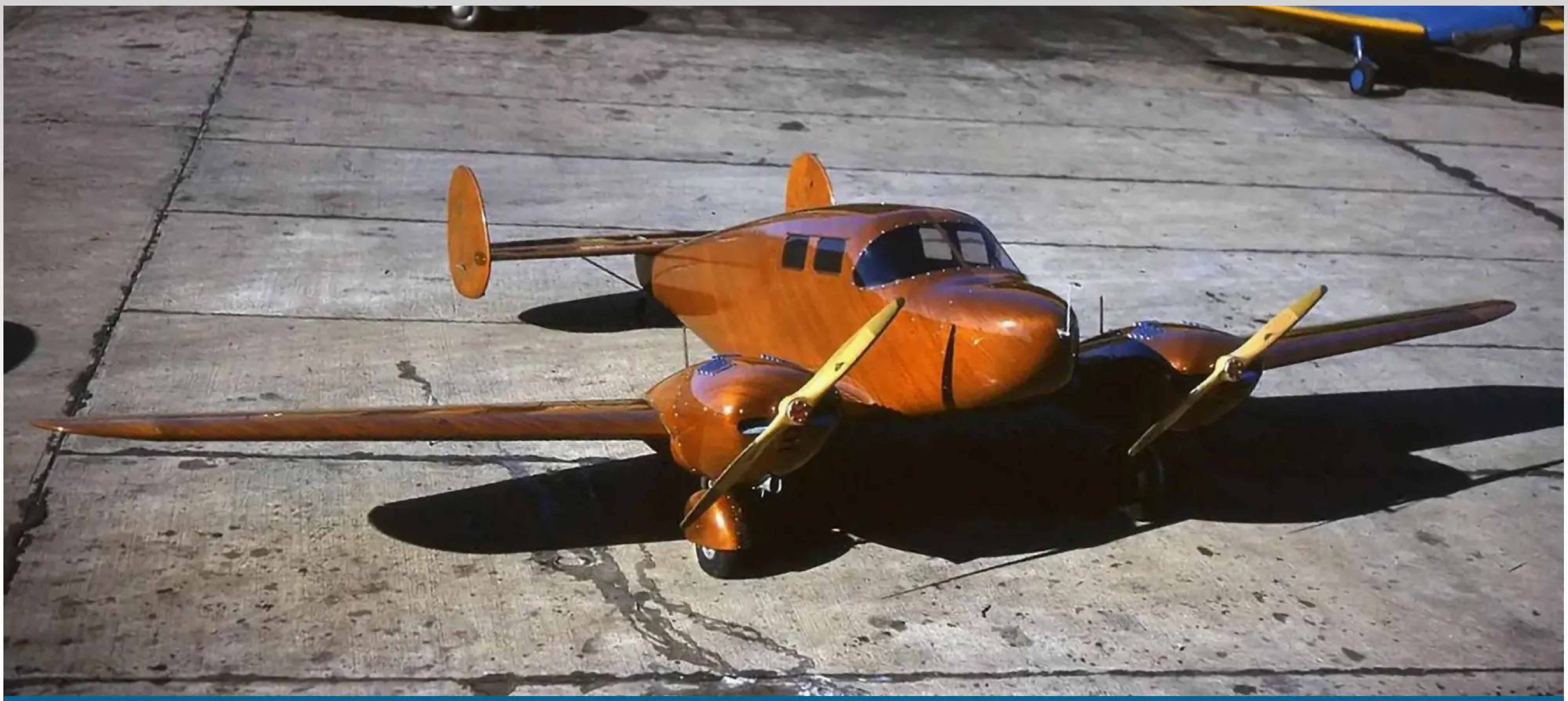
The 2-4-65 being prepared for a flight. Note that the landing gear fairings have been added.



It is unclear how Langley was attempting to market the little twin but it was probably aimed as a low-cost twin-engine business aircraft.

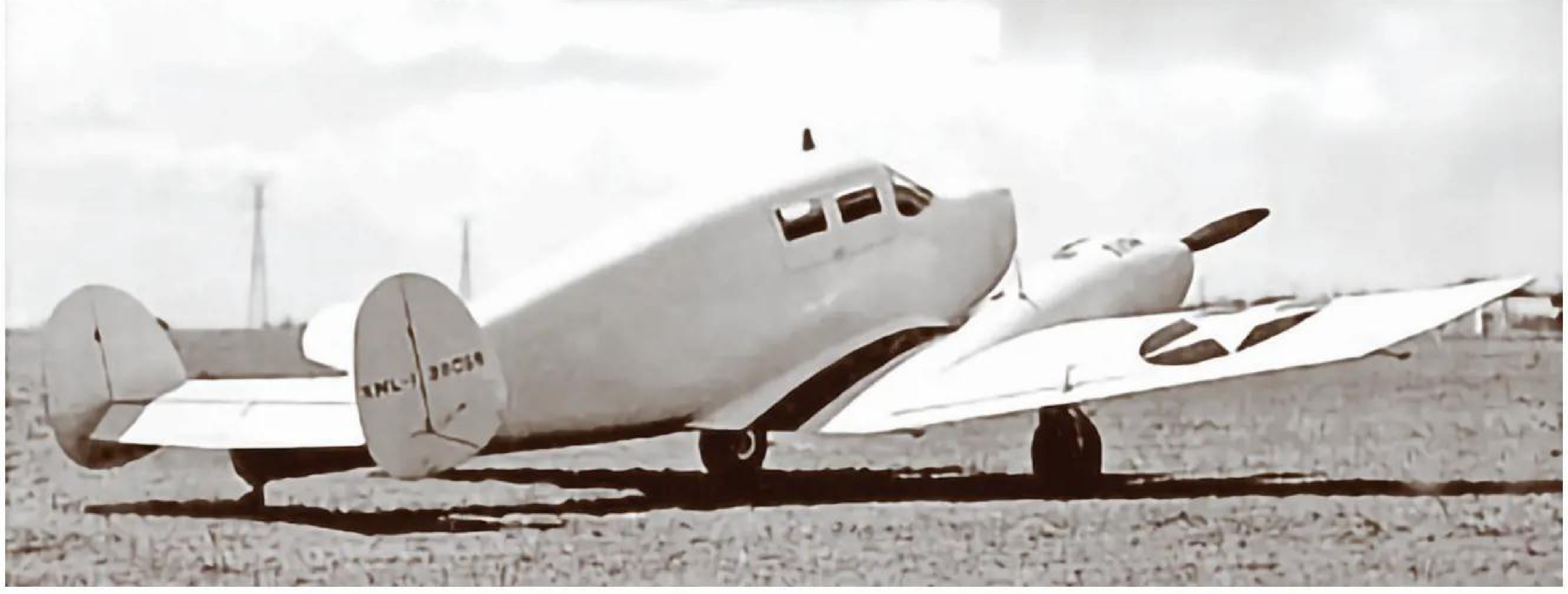
that the 65-hp Franklins had been replaced by Franklin 4-AC-199-FS four-cylinder horizontally opposed powerplants to give marginally more power of 90-hp each. The Langley Twin was a small aircraft and we have decided to compare its size to the well-known Cessna 152 two-seat trainer. The 2-4-65 spanned 35-ft 2-in (the Cessna has a span of 33-ft 4-in) with a length of 20-ft 6-in (the Cessna comes in at 24-ft 1-in) and that gives an idea of the Langley's small size, especially since it carried four people in its cabin. The prototype received the experimental civil registration NX29099 and the wooden surface was given a deep coat of varnish that was sanded, reapplied, and sanded again to produce an extremely slick and smooth aerodynamic surface that also enhanced the color and grain of the wood. As can be seen in the surviving Rudy Arnold color photographs, it appears that a small amount of bronze or copper pigment may have been added to give the plane its extremely rich and attractive coloring. We have not been able to establish the date of the first flight nor who was the pilot but it may have been Jensen. Langley hoped to market the 2-4-65 with a price of $8500 but the war situation was such that a civil market could not be found.

The 2-4-90 was registered N51706 and the design attracted the interest

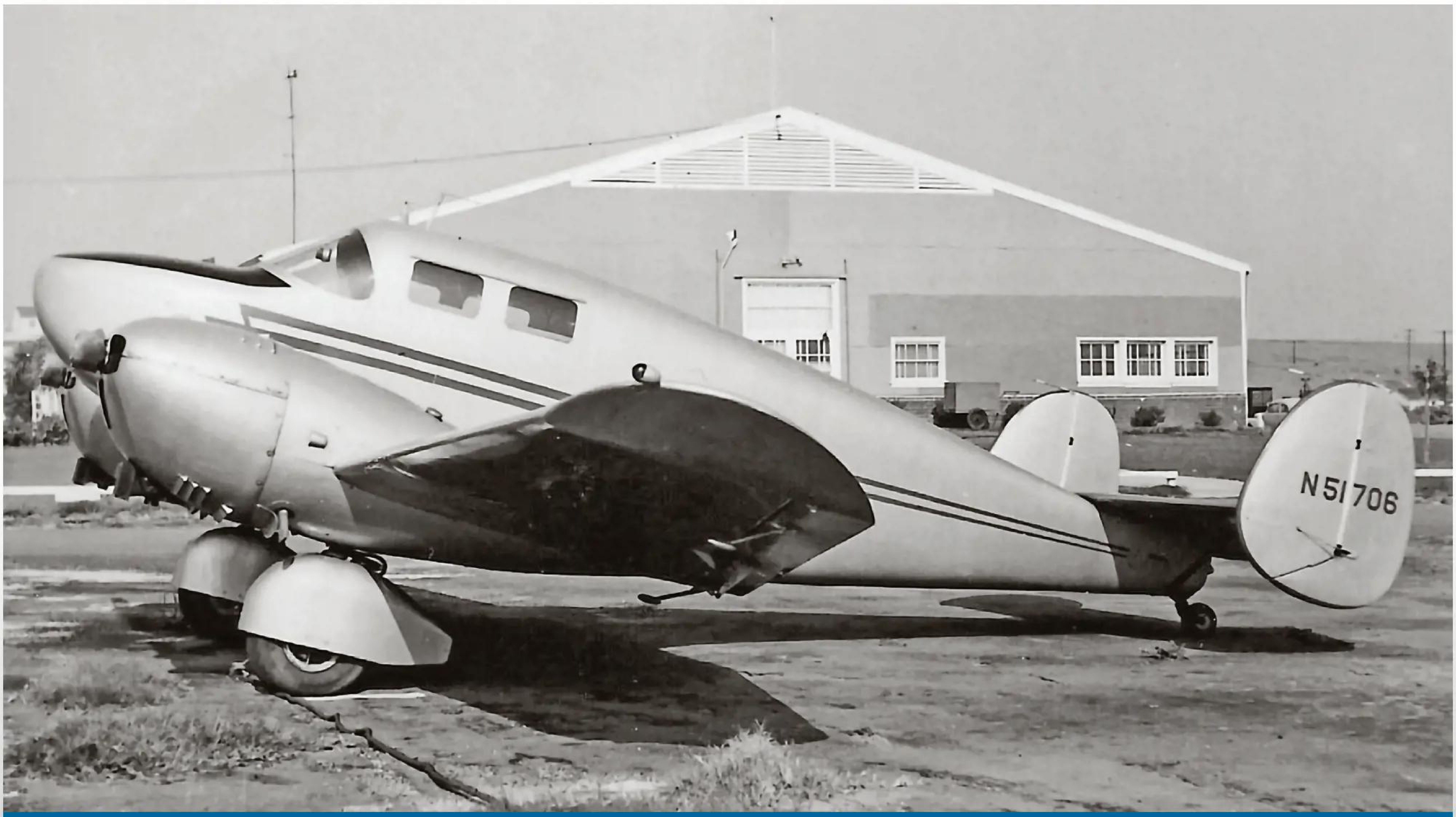


With its low available power and the fact that the propellers were fixed-pitch, single-engine handling qualities of the 2-4-65 would probably have been limited.

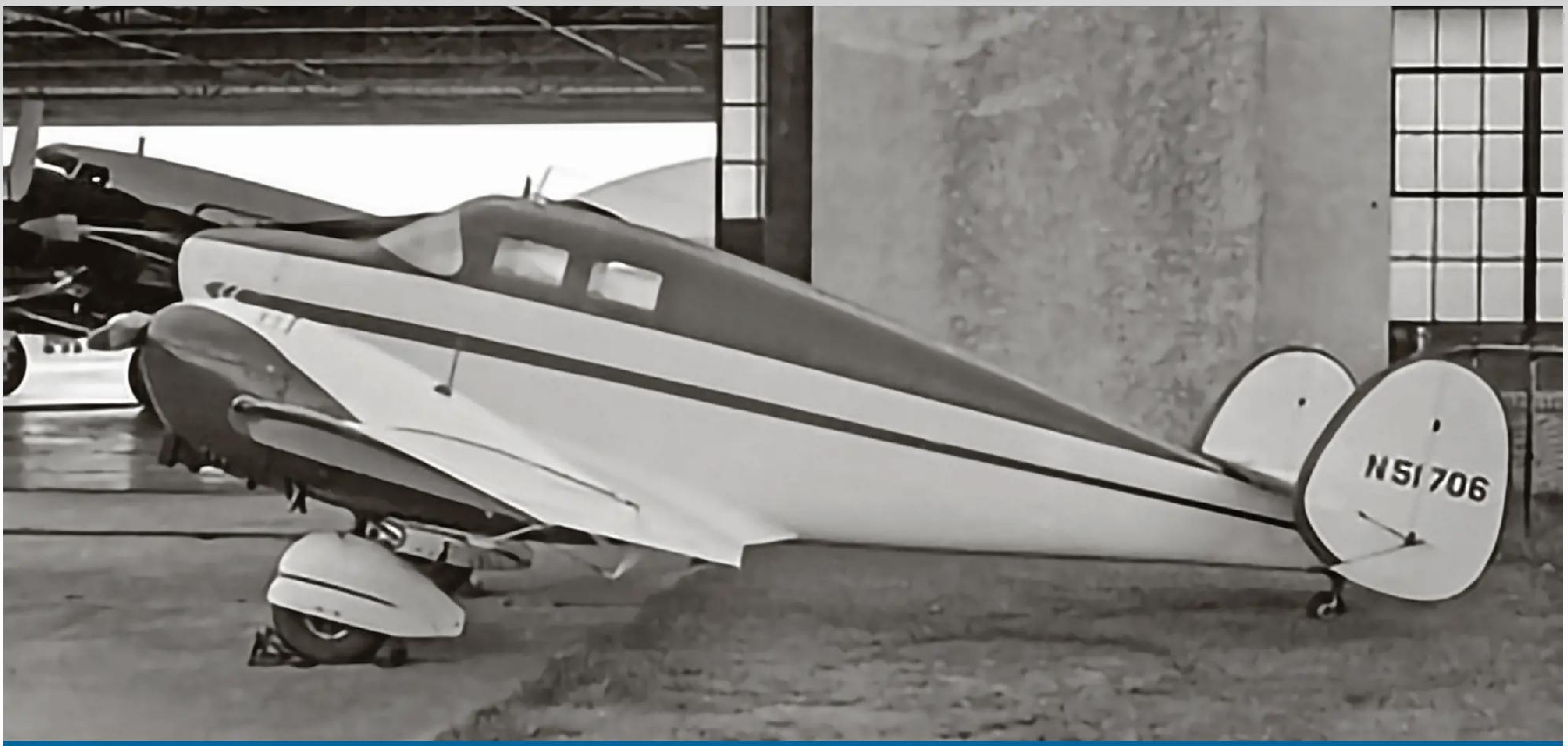
of the US Navy who acquired it as XNL-1 BuNo 39056. The aircraft was delivered in what appears to be a bright yellow trainer-type finish and surviving records seem to indicate it was extensively tested by the Navy and that service test pilots found the aircraft to have excellent handling characteristics with a top speed of 150-mph, cruise of 135-mph, and a landing speed of 55-mph (performance figures vary depending on the published



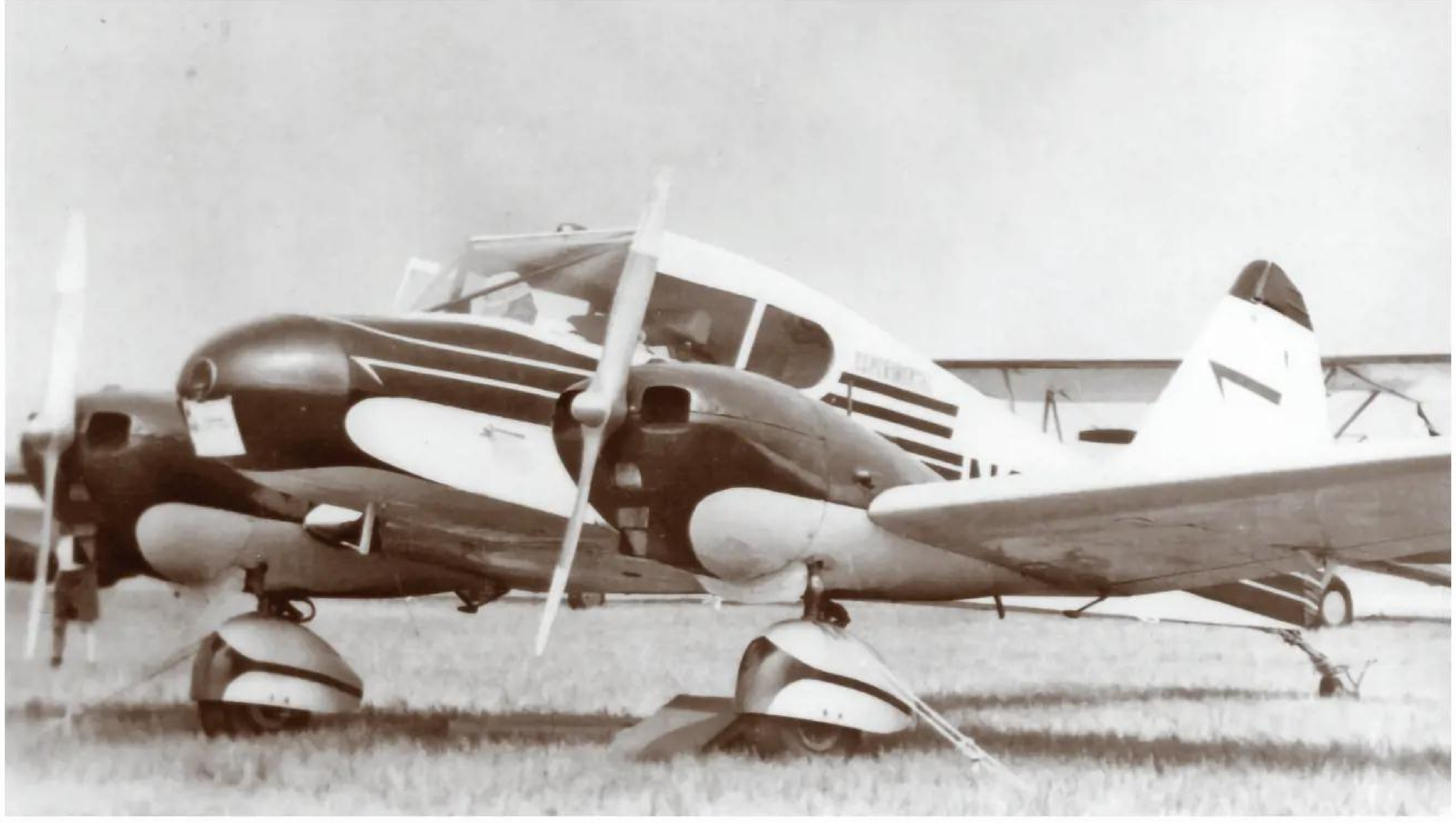
Although we tried, this is the only photo we could find of the US Navy's Langley XLN-1. Overall finish was probably trainer yellow.



The XLN-1 was sold surplus as N51706. The aircraft had received an Approved Type Certificate and this meant it could be operated in the standard category.



The XLN-1 went through several paint schemes and appears to have been well-maintained until being written off (although the NTSB notes damage as "minor") in a crash at Tulsa on 26 September 1965.



The wings, engines, and tail of the XLN-1 were combined with the fuselage of a Stinson 108 to create the Pierce Arrow U-2. Underpowered, the plane went through several engine changes and the tail unit was modified to a single large vertical.

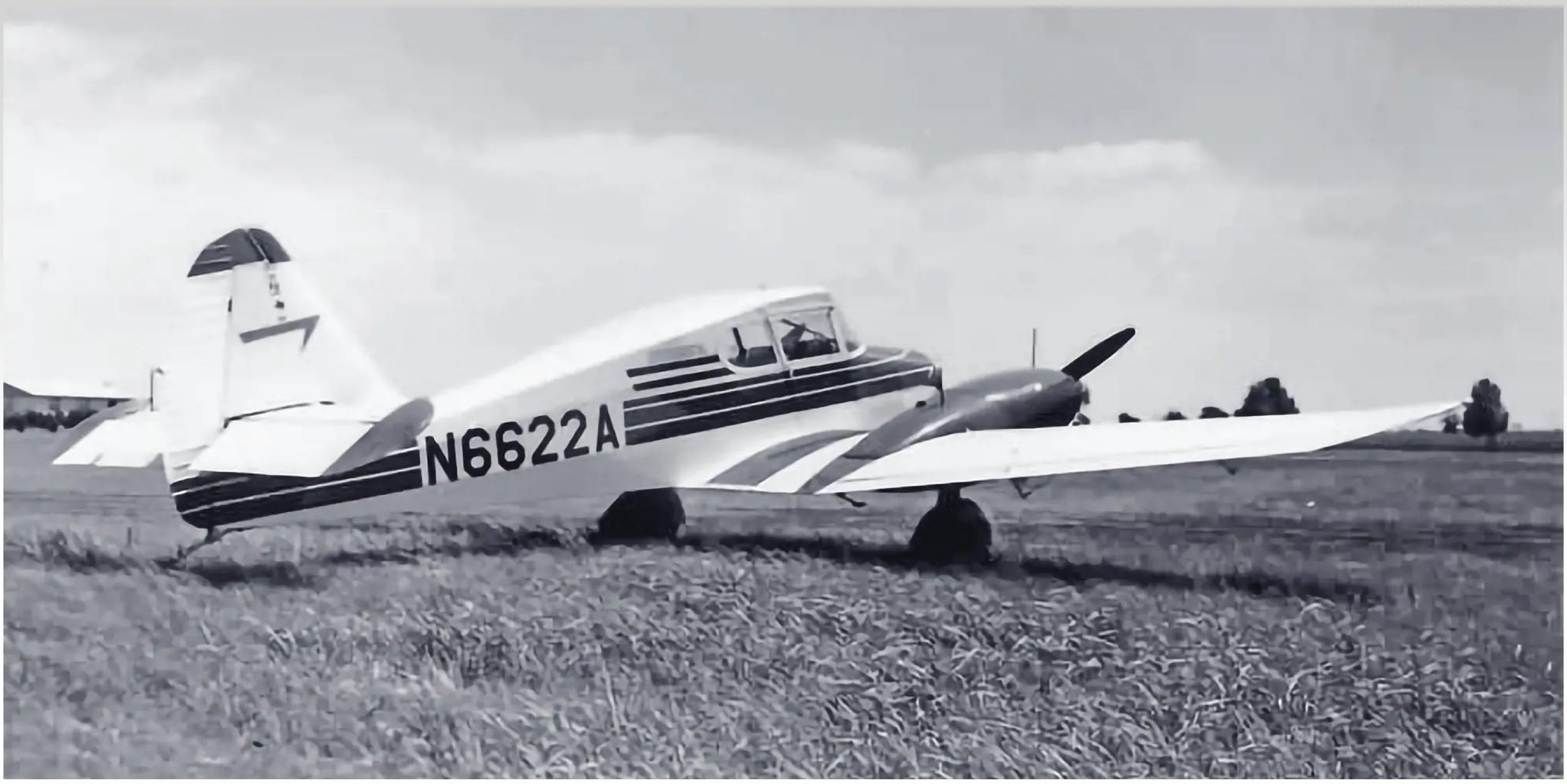
source). Range for the XNL-1 was listed as 450-miles. It seems that the little aircraft would have made a good primary multi-engine trainer but that was not to be and no orders followed.

With America's entry into the Second World War, the history of the Langley becomes a bit confusing. With no orders forthcoming, it appears that the company was taken over during 1942 by the Andover-Kent Aviation Company and this organization did a great deal of subcontracting work for aircraft builders. The feared lack of aluminum never happened and, in fact, it appears that the resin material was more difficult to obtain that aluminum. The XNL-1 may have been completed by Andover-Kent.

The Langley 2-4-90 received CAA Approved Type Certificate (ATC) 755 on 29 December 1943, which is odd since the war was in full swing and very little general aviation activity was taking place. Some aviation publications have stated that a third aircraft was either completed or under construction but we have not been able to find any photographic evidence. We have also been unable to find the fate of the first prototype but it appears that the XNL-1 was put up for sale by the War Assets Administration but we do not know from what location. The XNL-1 was given the civil registration of N51706 after purchase and during its lifetime it appeared in several different attractive paint schemes.

N51706 seems to have been well-maintained post-war and certainly would have attracted attention wherever it went. On 26 September 1965, the pilot (the sole occupant aboard) was coming in to land shortly before noon at Tulsa, Oklahoma, when he lost control after the brakes apparently seized. The plane ground-looped and then went over on its back, breaking the carefully crafted fuselage in two and causing other fuselage damage. The aircraft was listed as destroyed but the wings, cowls and tail apparently escaped damage.

Dejected by the fact his unique aircraft now appeared to be written off, the owner put the remains up for sale. In 1966, the once-beautiful mahogany aircraft caught the attention of flying enthusiasts John Pierce and Hurley Boehler who happened to have the engine-less fuselage of a Stinson 108 in their hangar at Harvey Young Airport in Tulsa. It is always difficult to determine the exact moment of when such aviation ideas germinate, but John and Hurley decided to remove the broken fuselage and then mate the tail surfaces, wings, and engines to the Stinson. A friend named Jerry Hines helped with the conversion and Jerry, looking at the pile of wood, said something to the effect of "you two

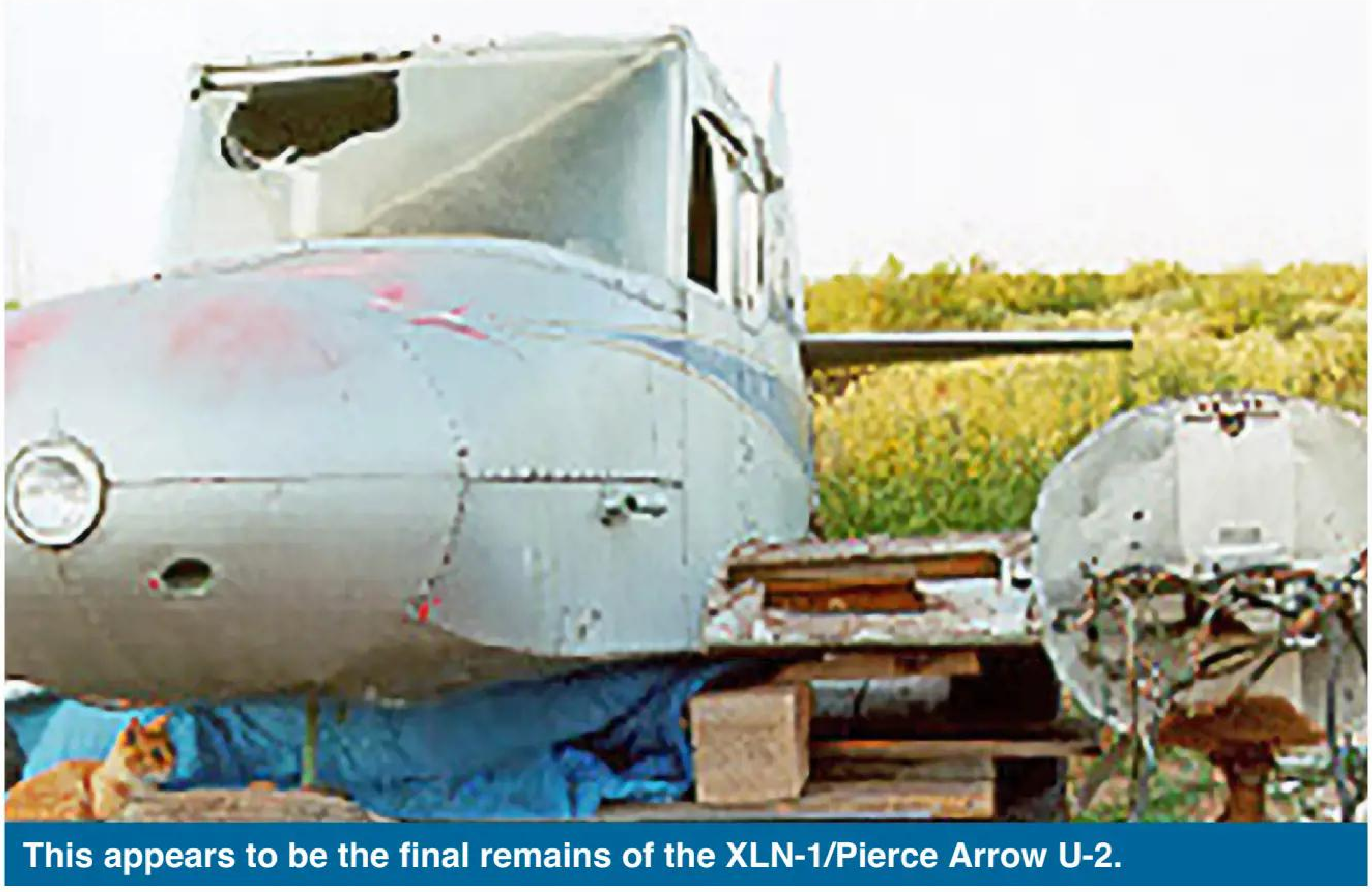


The Pierce Arrow U-2 went through numerous owners as various modifications were undertaken.

guys are crazy." As time progressed, the new machine needed a name and it became the Pierce Arrow U-2. The Pierce Arrow was a famous classic car and Pierce was also John's last name. It is obvious where the U-2 came from.

Initially, the men left the 90-hp Franklins in place and the aircraft, now listed as an "experimental homebuilt," received the license of N6622A on 8 July 1966, showing that work was completed in a short amount of time. The Stinson fuselage had the area occupied by the nose-mounted engine faired in while the wing with its little 90-horse Franklins fitted with fixed-pitch wood Flottorp 70KA54 propellers and twin mahogany tails stayed in place. With limited power and fixed-pitch props, an engine failure would have proven to be challenging.

In 1981, the aircraft was purchased by Jerry Hinds who had been watching the plane for some time and it had 551 flying hours but power remained a real problem with previous owners. In late 1967, the Franklins were replaced with 115-hp Lycoming O-290D engines with Sensenich M74DM propellers and this helped out a bit but in 1980 it was re-engined again, this time with Lycoming O-320 motors and McCauley 74-64 props. Also, the twin verticals/rudders were eliminated in favor of a large single unit. Jerry stated that the Langley had only two 17-gallon fuel tanks (contrary to earlier published records) and these were situated in the nacelles behind the engines. To extend range when flying cross-country, Jerry would often shut down one engine. As the fuel supply dwindled, he would restart the "dead" engine and then shutdown the "live" motor as apparently there was no cross-feed fuel system. Jerry stated with the upgraded engines, the Pierce Arrow U-2 cruised at 150-mph with a 2000-fpm rate of climb but these figures probably should be viewed with some skepticism. The hybrid homebuilt even made it onto the cover of the April 1974 issue of *Plane & Pilot* magazine.



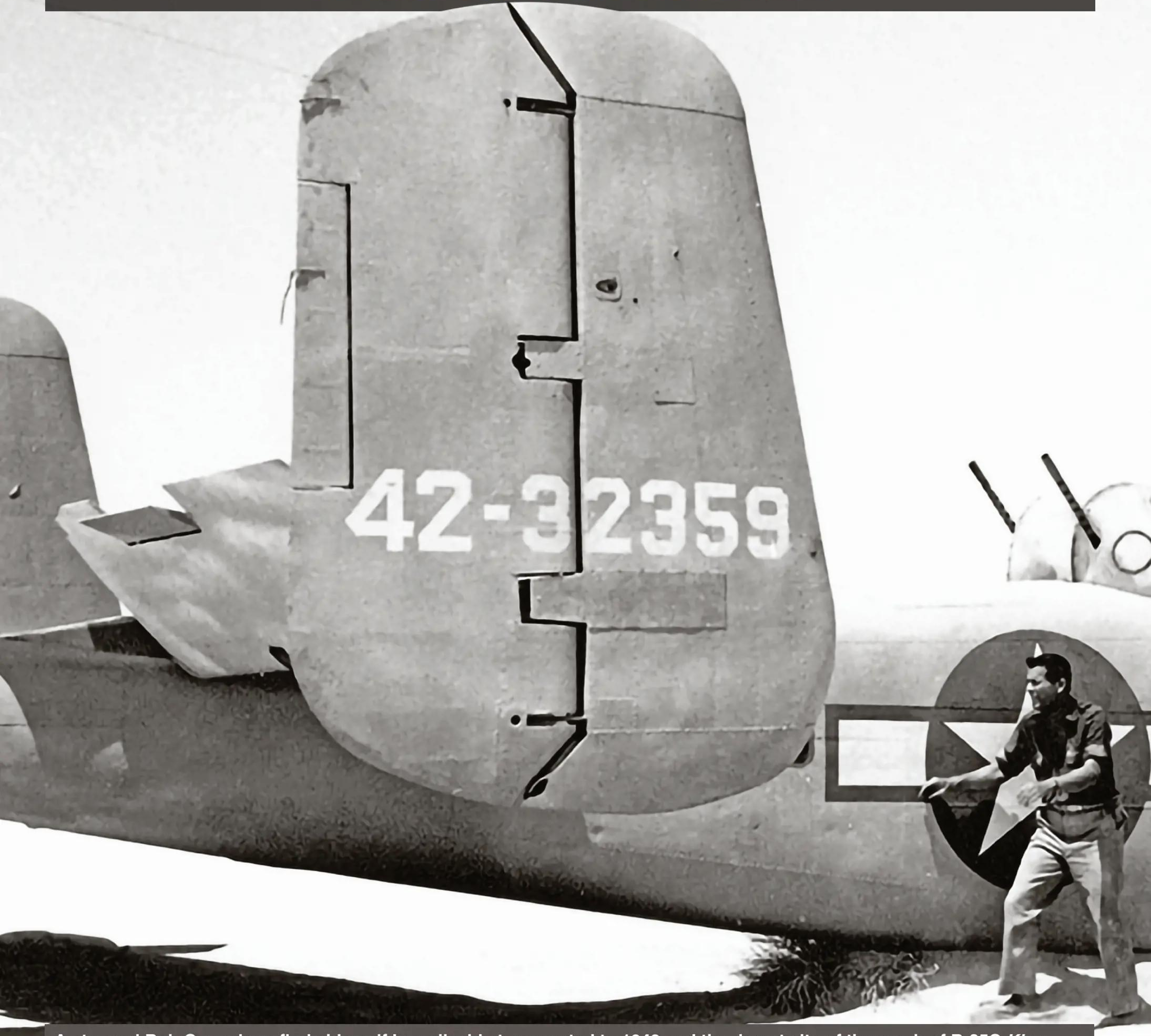
This appears to be the final remains of the XLN-1/Pierce Arrow U-2.

So what finally happened to the Langley 2-4-90/XLN-1/Pierce Arrow U-2? Unfortunately, nothing good. It its original form, the Langley would have made for a wonderful museum piece to illustrate how plasticized wood was being utilized in the late 1930s. As a derivate homebuilt, the plane's condition kept going downhill as it passed through various owners. In our files, we found one poor snapshot of the plane parked in the weeds with engines removed, Langley Process wood rotting, and fuselage fabric in tatters. We can only presume the plane was scrapped at a later date but we would also appreciate any updated information that readers may have on this most interesting prototype. **AC**

KING NINE WILL RETURN

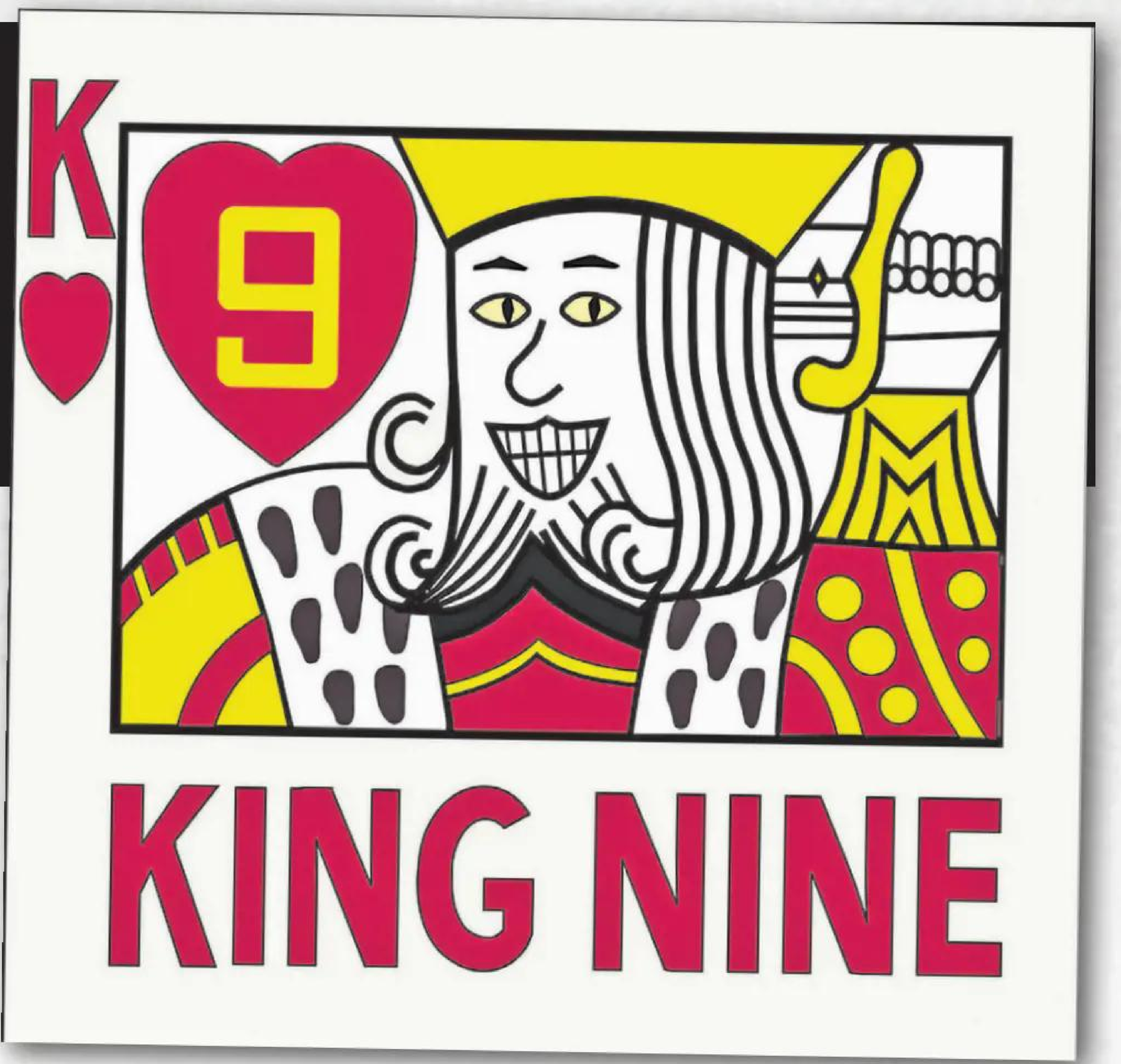
MADE FAMOUS IN AN EPISODE OF THE TWILIGHT ZONE, *THIS RARE B-25C IS SCHEDULED FOR RESTORATION*

BY BRUCE ORRISS AND STEVE WHITBY



A stunned Bob Cummings finds himself inexplicably transported to 1943 and the desert site of the crash of B-25C *King Nine*. The disassembled bomber was transported from Jack Hardwick's storage yard to a site at Edwards AFB for the five-day filming. The top rear turret was missing so Hardwick substituted a turret from a Martin PBM Mariner. The B-25C's actual serial was 42-32354 and studio artists changed the last number to 9 so it would fit in with the aircraft's name. As can be seen, the airframe was in very good condition..

EDITOR'S NOTE: **While preparing this story, I recalled watching *The Twilight Zone* when it first came out. I really enjoyed the science fiction twist to the programs featured in the series. Being an airplane fanatic at an early age, I also particularly liked "King Nine Will Not Return" and certainly had no idea that I would be associated with the actual aircraft decades later. I would be interested to hear from readers that watched this particular episode and to learn if it had any influence on their interest in aviation history. If you have any comments, please contact me at *moleary2challenge@gmail.com*.**



Nose art for *King Nine.*

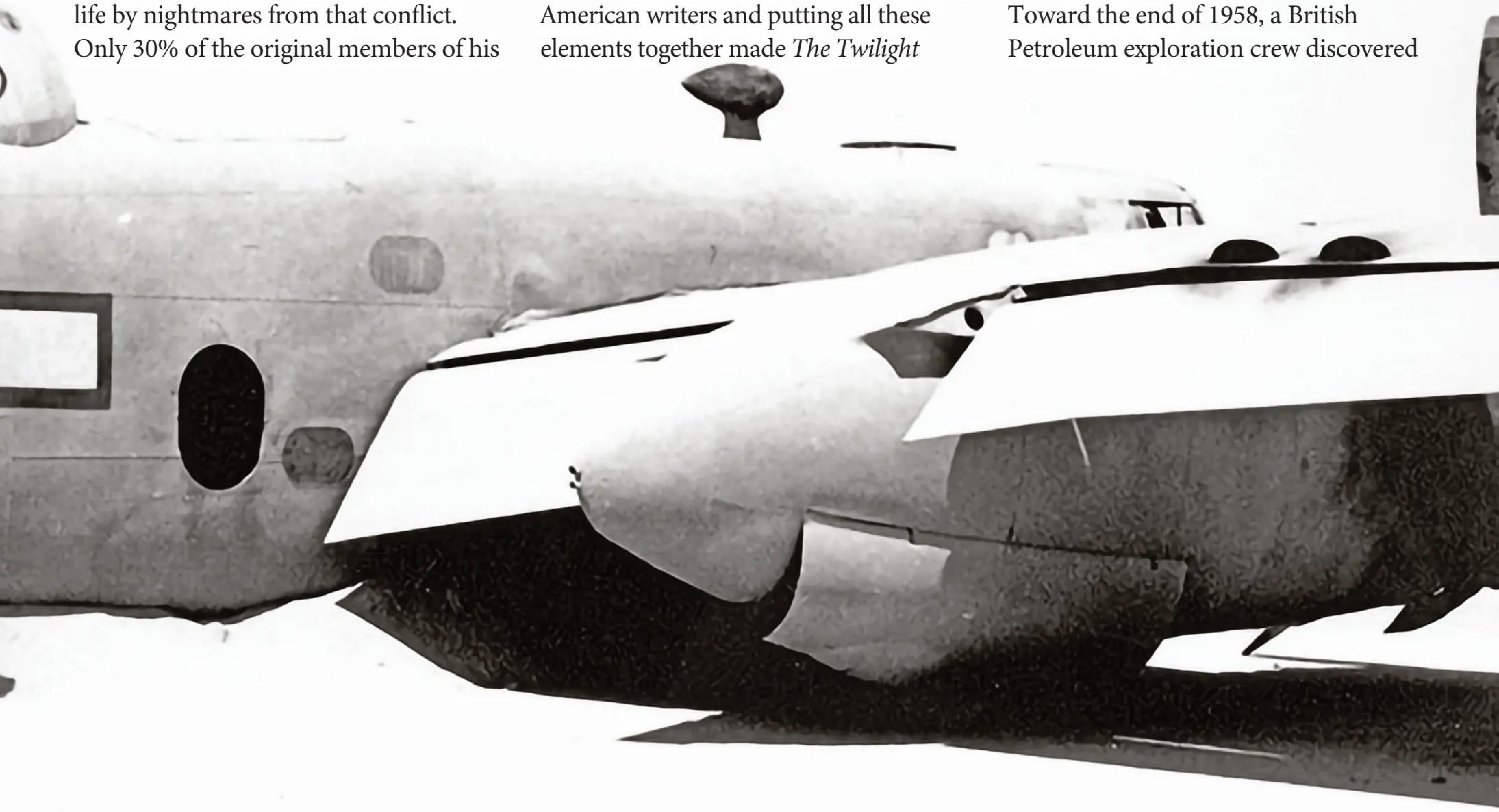
Rod Serling was born in 1924 and grew up in the Jewish community of Binghampton, New York, where he enjoyed school and athletics. Of slight build and 5 feet 4 inches in height, Serling entered athletics and took a particular interest in history and the theater. As a young man, he watched the rise of the Nazis and became very absorbed by the politics of the period and this would influence his later work.

During the Second World War, Serling served in the US Army as a paratrooper and demolition specialist (his superior stated that Serling "didn't have the wits or aggressiveness required for combat") with the 511th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 11th Airborne Division, in the Pacific. He was wounded in the wrist and knee during combat and would be awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star.

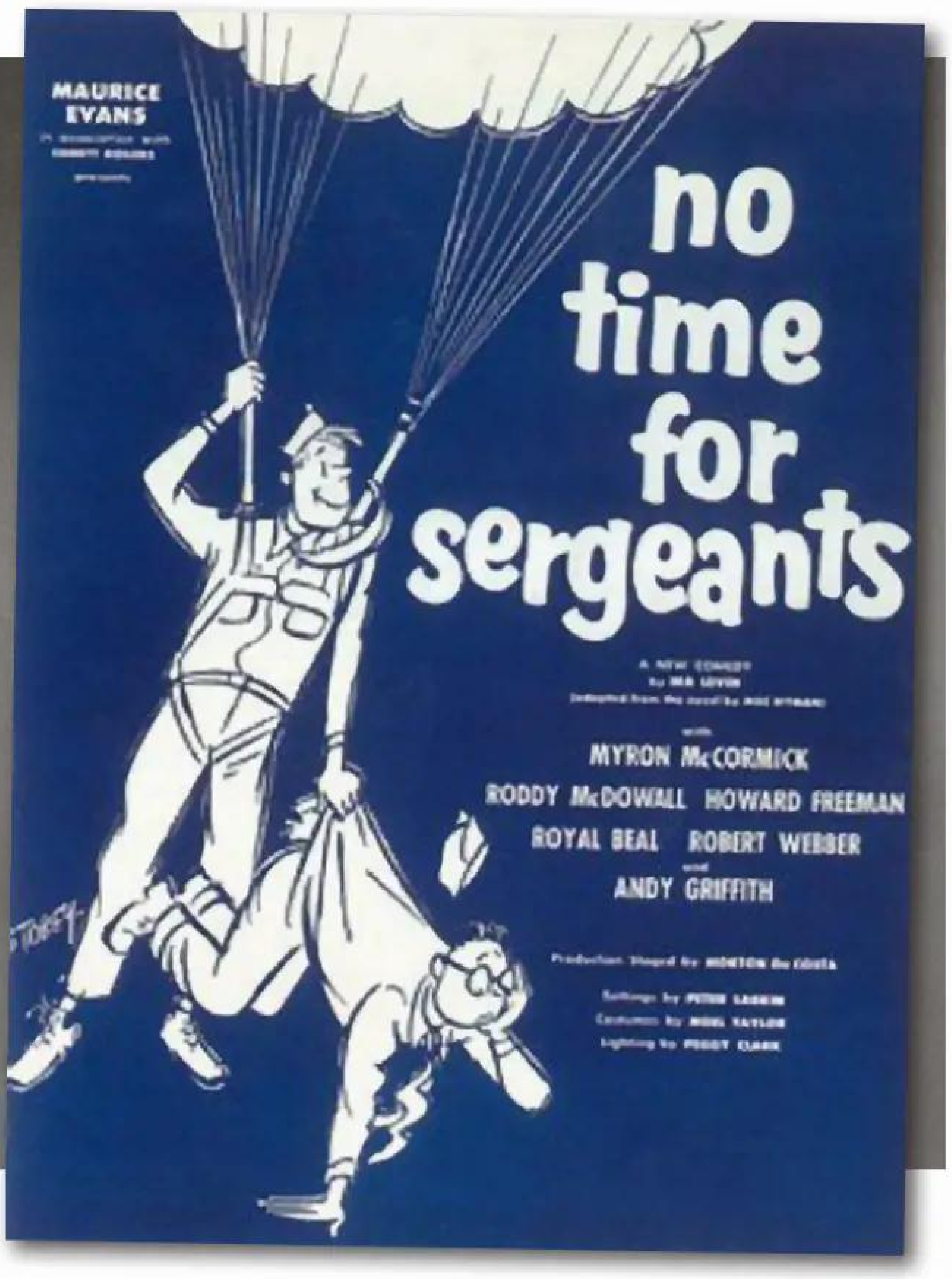
He understood the necessity of war but would be haunted for the rest of his life by nightmares from that conflict. Only 30% of the original members of his unit survived the war and he saw his best friend killed when he was hit by an air-dropped box of cargo.

After the war, Serling took up writing and was fascinated by the possibilities of television. After creating five major teleplays and gaining a strong reputation, Serling came up with the concept of *The Twilight Zone* as a television program that would combine elements of science fiction with then-current news topics. He also understood how television required the writer to condense maximum drama and emotion into a limited space and time (his older brother Robert was also a writer, specializing in aviation). He was also influenced by the short stories of the great American writers and putting all these elements together made *The Twilight Zone* an instant hit and an American classic that still plays today on numerous streaming services. Running for five years, Serling would write nearly 100 episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, which was an incredible feat.

Serling always carefully read the news to search for any possible plot lines for *The Twilight Zone*. Earlier, one particularly story had caught his attention along with the attention of most people in the civilized world. Toward the end of 1958, a British Petroleum exploration crew discovered



The discovery of the B-24D *Lady Be Good* would trigger Sterling to write the script for "King Nine Will Not Return." Sterling would smoke three to four packs of cigarettes per day and this would lead to his death at age 50.



Prior to its appearance on *The Twilight Zone*, the B-25C had been used in the 1958 Andy Griffith comedy *No Time for Sergeants*.

The B-25C can be seen in the background in this still from the film.

the wreckage of a WWII bomber — it was a Consolidated B-24D Liberator that carried the name *Lady Be Good*.

The bomber had come down in featureless desert some 400 miles from the Libyan town of Soluch. There was no sign of the crew. The USAF immediately flew a team to the crash site and discovered that the interior of the bomber still contained food and water. The crash-landed Liberator was in remarkable condition and even some of the radios worked. But where was the crew?

USAF teams scoured the area for any trace of the men that had flown aboard the bomber. Newspapers and magazines around the world covered the incredible story of the "ghost bomber" in heavy detail — sometimes on a daily basis. Sadly, over the next few months, the remains of the crewmen were discovered one by one. Thinking they were over the ocean at night, they had taken to their parachutes and eventually died as they tried to find civilization across the featureless desert. It was a story that captivated the world, especially since the end of the war was less than 15 years distant.

The story, and the tragic elements, captured Sterling's attention. He was convinced the subject would be ideal for his new *The Twilight Zone* series. In a short amount of time, he created a script based on the *Lady Be Good* incident but with a unique twist. He gave the script the title "King Nine Will Not Return" and it would star Robert Cummings who, like Serling, was also a WWII veteran and a long-time pilot. Cummings would later recall, "I wanted Rod to do a script for me to use on one of my TV specials. Money is useless in a situation like that. The man [Rod] is so busy that he can't be tempted with money. It was then that we worked it out — he would supply a script and I would star in the opener for the second season of *The Twilight Zone*."

The program opens in April 1943 in an arid stretch of the Libyan Desert. Captain James Embry (Cummings) is the pilot of North American B-25C Mitchell named *King Nine*. Out of fuel following a bombing run to Italy, the aircraft belly-lands in the desert. Knocked unconscious during the crash, he wakes up to find he is the only crewmember at the crash site. There are no signs of the other men.

In time, Capt. Embry finds the grave of one of the men but no trace of anyone else. It a particularly eerie scene, the pilot returns to the B-25C and sees his copilot (Richard Lupino) in the cockpit. He rushes to greet him but the copilot suddenly disappears.

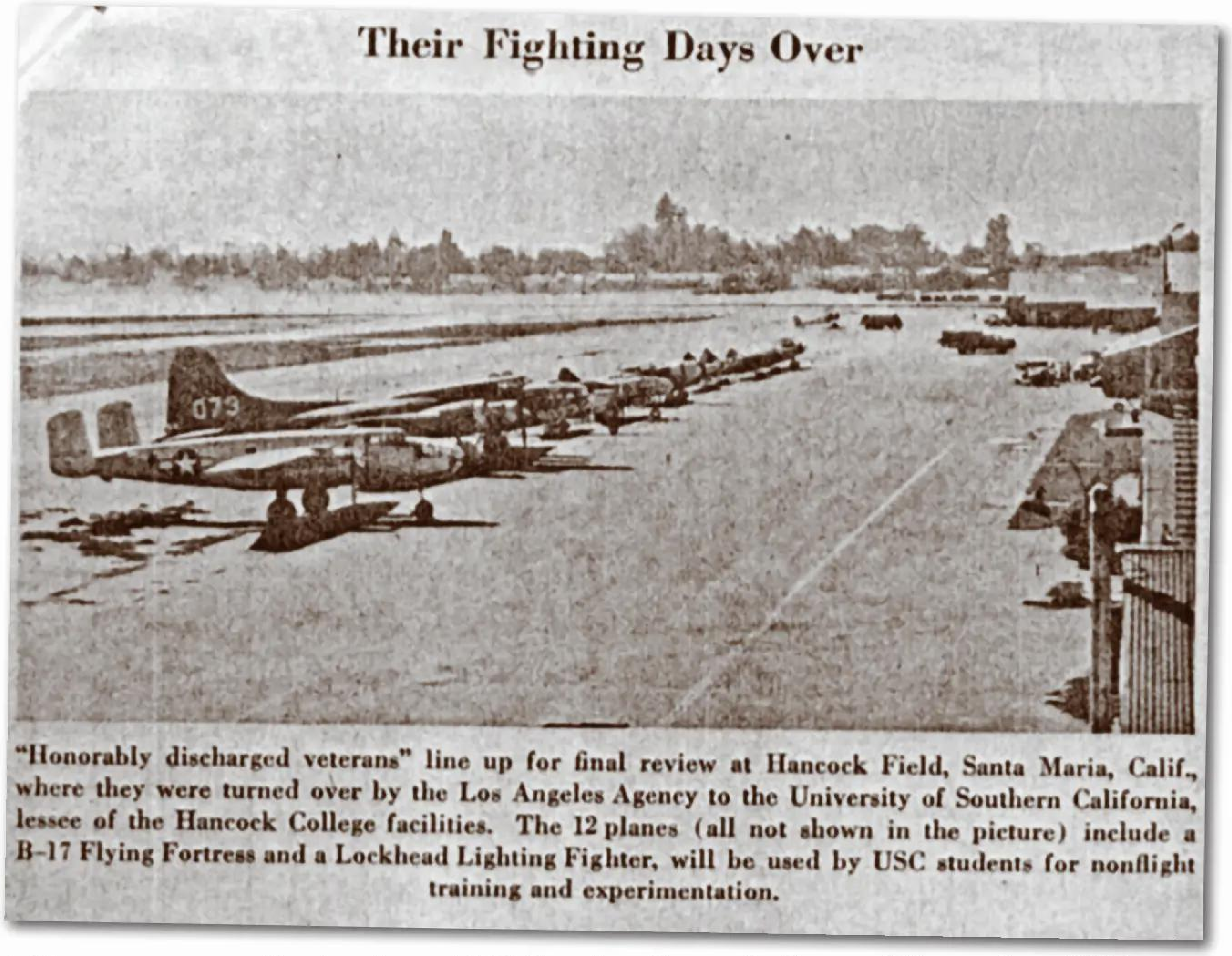
Then, Embry sees the rest of the crew and he runs to meet them but they also disappear. At this point, he is in full panic mode. Hearing a noise overhead, he looks up to see a flight of Grumman F9F jets — a type unknown in 1943. He then collapses.

Embry wakes up in a military hospital

where he is being treated for what today would be called PTSD. As doctors and officers gather around him, the true story becomes known. When it came time for the bombing mission, Embry was ill and could not fly with his crew. When the news of *King Nine's* discovery in the desert hits television and newspapers, Embry sees all of it and the news triggers a regression where he thinks he is in the desert with his lost crew. After awakening, Embry tells the doctors that he had been with the wreck of the aircraft but they put it down to the former pilot having hallucinations — until a nurse is moving his shoes and drops one, causing desert sand to spill out. Thus ended the story of the bomber named *King Nine*.

"King Nine Will Not Return" premiered on the CBS Television Network during September 1960 and kicked off the second season of the series. It was an immediate hit. Hank Grant was a critic for *The Hollywood Report* and he would write, "this performance by Robert Cummings, an extremely difficult role that ran the gamut from relief to joy to panic to crazed hysteria, should merit serious consideration when Emmy time comes around." Today, "King Nine" remains one of the most popular episodes of the series.

So, how did this program come together and, perhaps more importantly, where did the early model of the Mitchell come from? B-25C-10-NA 42-32354 was delivered to the USAAF on 14 January 1943. The bomber was then flown to the NAA modification center at Kansas City for the latest updates before being assigned to the 66th Observation Squadron that was flying out of Morris Field in North Carolina. The B-25C then



Their Fighting Days Over

"Honorably discharged veterans" line up for final review at Hancock Field, Santa Maria, Calif., where they were turned over by the Los Angeles Agency to the University of Southern California, lessee of the Hancock College facilities. The 12 planes (all not shown in the picture) include a B-17 Flying Fortress and a Lockhead Lighting Fighter, will be used by USC students for nonflight training and experimentation.

This newspaper clipping from *RFC Surplus Property News* of November 1945 shows some of the aircraft transferred to Hancock College in Santa Maria and the B-25C is at the lead. (Scott Thompson)

TODAY'S NEWS

New York DAILY Chronicle

FINAL EDITION

WORLD WAR II BOMBER FOUND INTACT IN DESERT

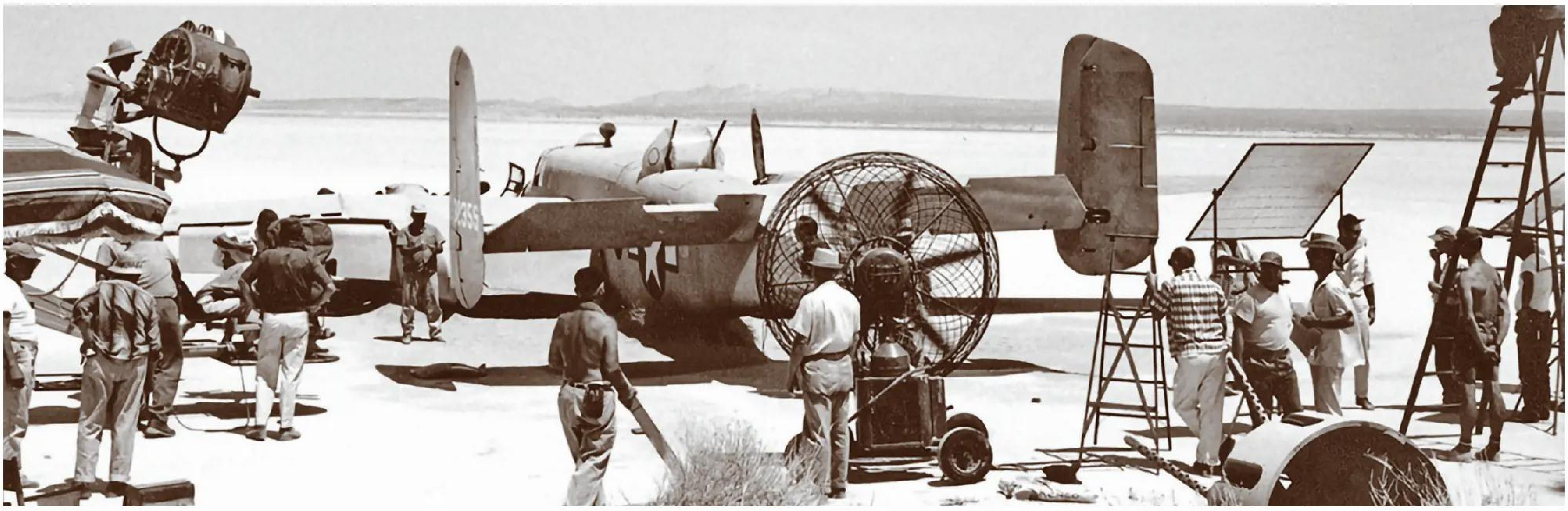
B-25 Mitchell Lies 17 Years in Desert

NO CLUE AS TO FATE OF CREW

Mystery Plane Baffles Authorities

LATE NEWS FLASHES

Cummings sees a newspaper announcing the discovery of *King Nine* and this triggers his regression back to WWII.



The bomber was carefully reassembled at the remote desert location. Note the wind machine. Each day, a DC-3 would fly the actors and crew from Santa Monica Airport to land on a highway near the set.

K
9
KING NINE

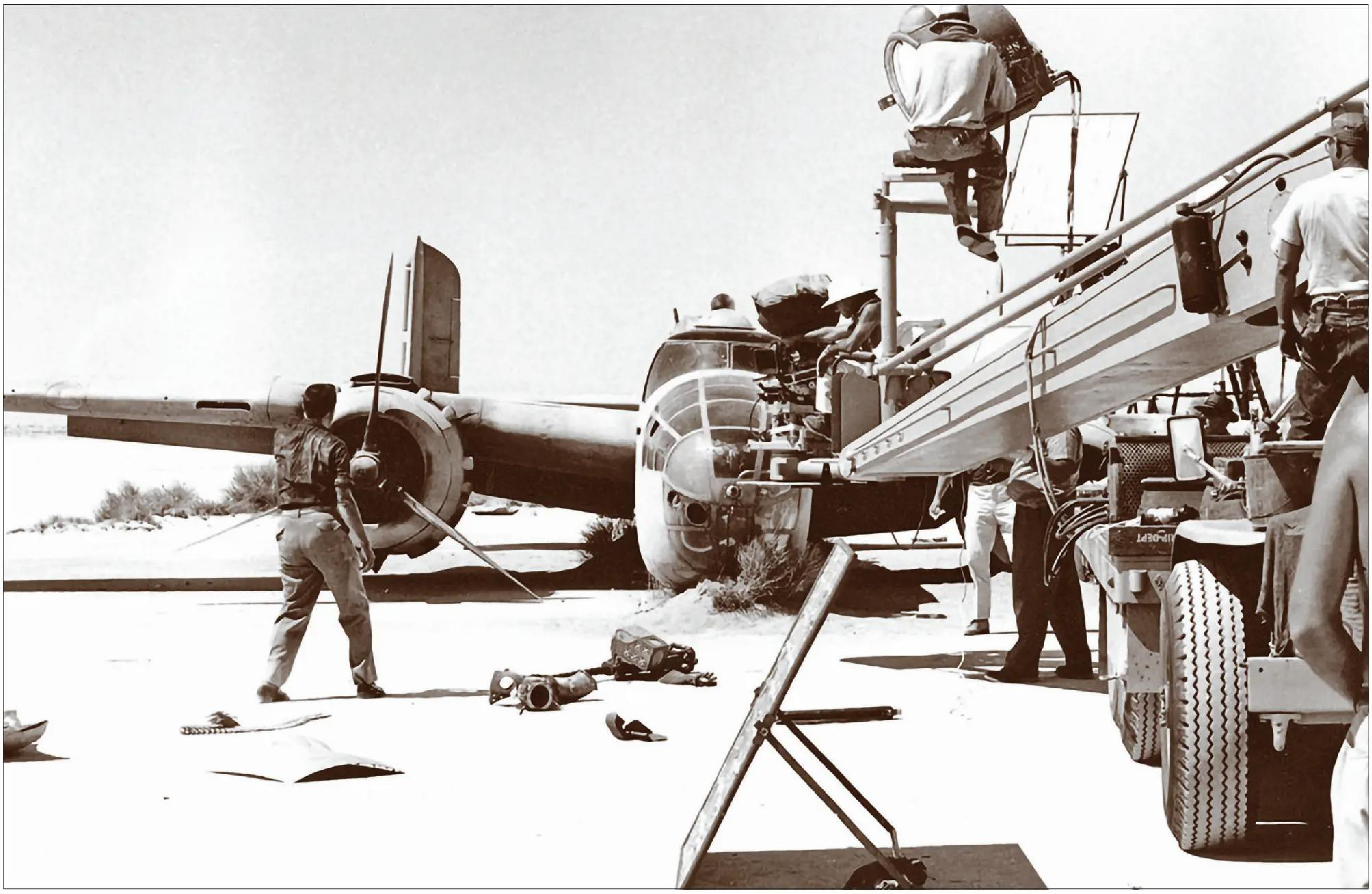
A puzzled Cummings tries to figure out what happened to the crew of his bomber.

participated in anti-submarine patrols while also flying missions to train artillery spotters. The aircraft was then used for crew training at Esler Field in Louisiana before heading to Marshal Field in Kansas where the Mitchell was reclassified as a TB-25C, again flying crew training missions along with other duties. The aircraft apparently kept doing those flights until the end of the war. It is noted that on 20 September 1945, the Mitchell was flown to storage at Cincinnati, Ohio, where it would be put up for disposal.

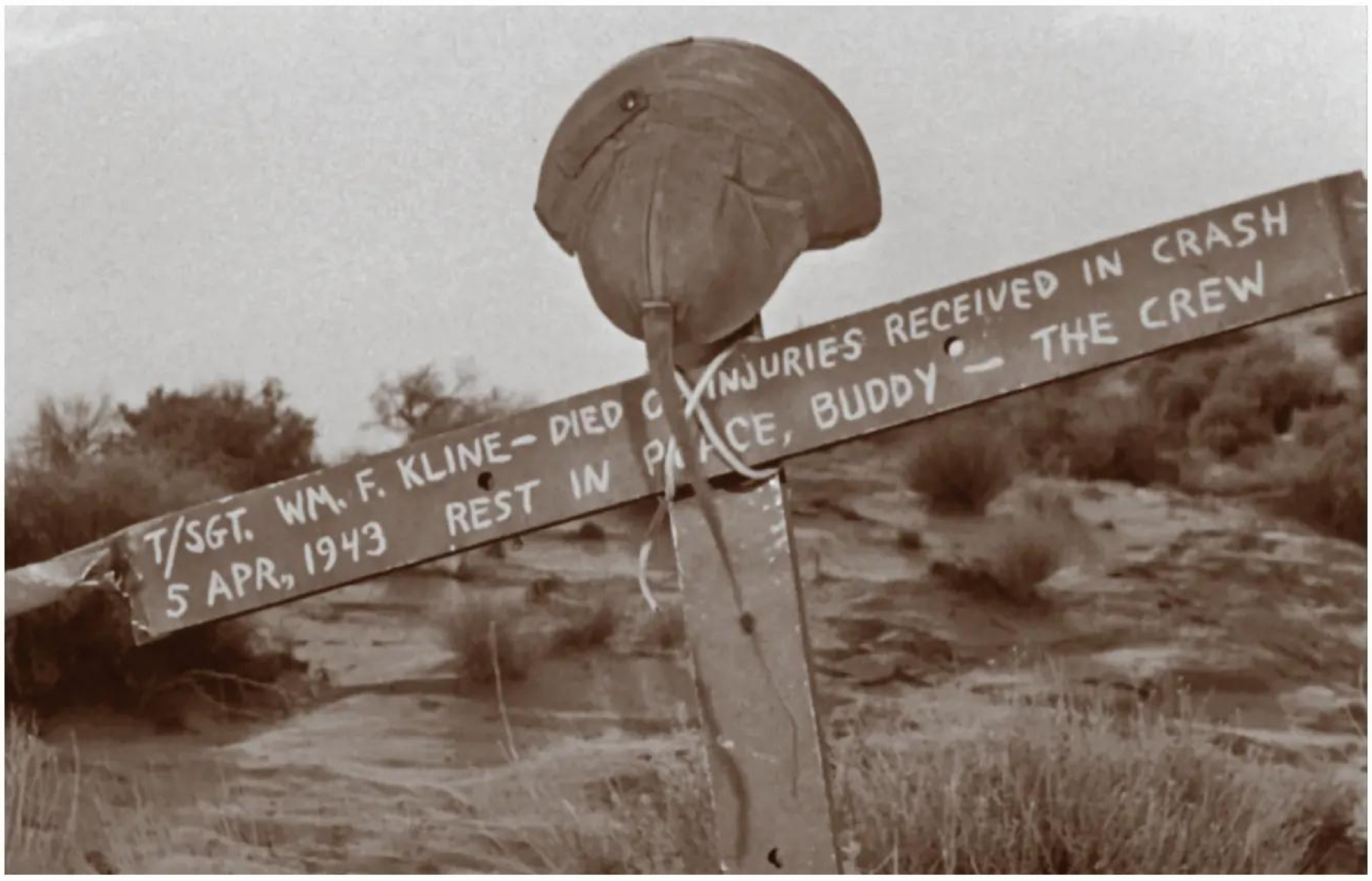
The Reconstruction Finance Corporation disposed of many surplus ex-military aircraft by giving them to schools where the airframes and engines could be utilized as training aids. Thus, TB-25C USAAF 42-32354 was one of a small fleet of former combat aircraft flown to the Hancock Aviation School in Santa Maria, California.

By 1955, the school decided to dispose of many of these aircraft. Used military aircraft dealer Jack Hardwick kept an eye on such schools and when he learned Santa Maria was getting rid of many planes, he swooped in and got a P-59 Airacomet, P-38 Lightning, the B-25C, and other aircraft. At the time, Hardwick had a ramshackle lot in El Monte where he kept his aeronautical treasures. The disassembled B-25C was hauled off to that location.

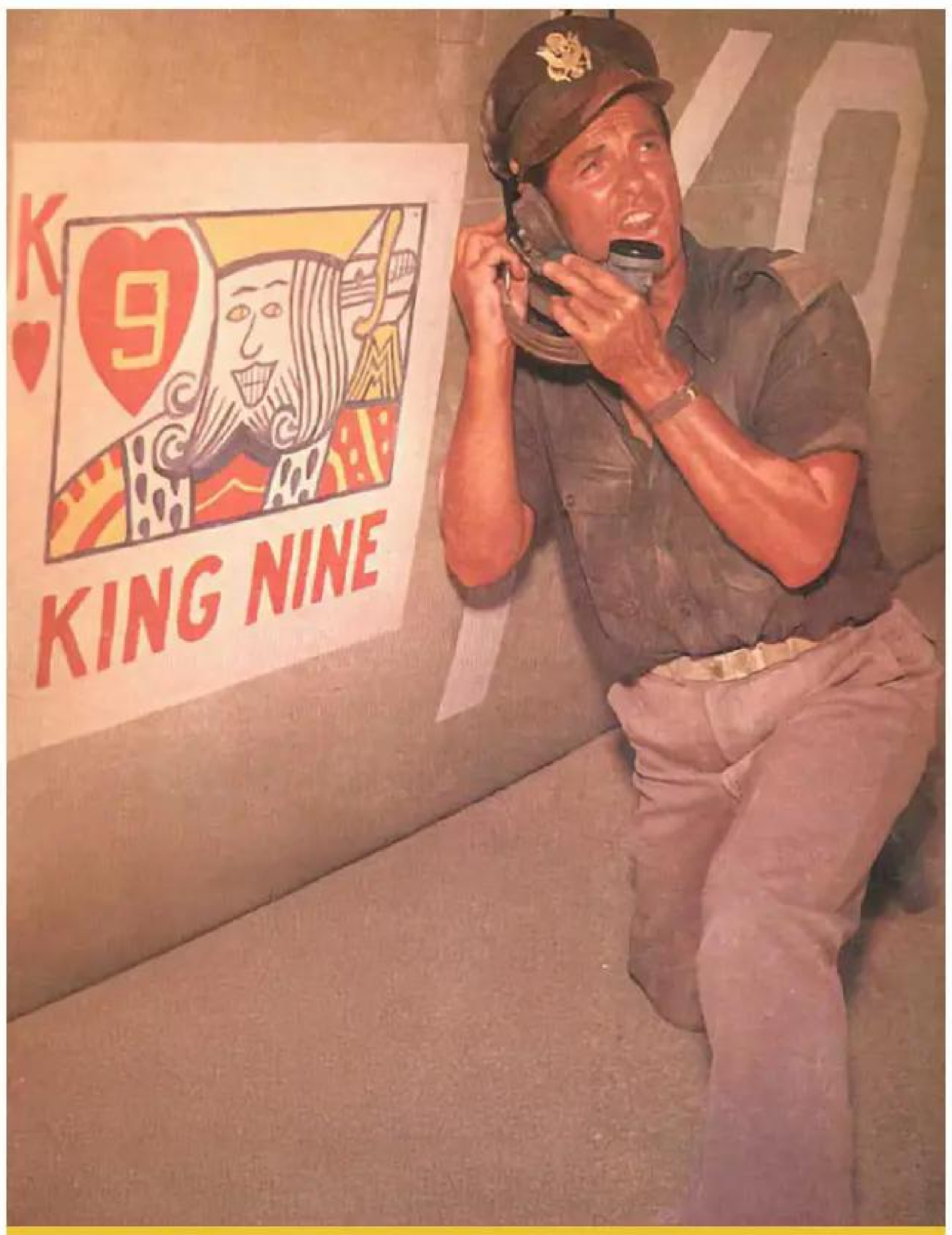
Somehow, Jack and Serling's Cayuga Production Company connected and a deal was made to use the B-25C in *The Twilight Zone*. It should also be noted that Hardwick leased this aircraft out for the 1958 Warner Brothers' film *No Time For Sergeants* starring Andy Griffith.



Filming the downed bomber in the desert. Considerable detail went into the filming including the feathered right propeller, installation of a Browning M2 .50-caliber machine gun in the nose, and a folded back left propeller to show that the R-2600 was developing power when the plane touched down in the desert.


T/SGT. WM. F. KLINE – DIED OF INJURIES RECEIVED IN CRASH
5 APR, 1943 REST IN PEACE, BUDDY — THE CREW

Cummings finds the grave of T/Sgt. Kline. Serling used the date 5 April 1943 — *Lady Be Good* went down on 4 April 1943.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9
KING NINE

Cummings attempts to utilize the bomber's radio.

Until recently, it has been reported that *The Twilight Zone* episode was filmed near Lone Pine, California, but that is not correct. The Mitchell, now painted in the markings of *King Nine*, was trucked to Rogers Dry Lake at Edwards AFB and set up for filming, which began on 14 August 1960.

Filming ran five days and it was hot — each day was over 100-degF and that made life miserable for cast and crew. The time was divided into two days for rehearsal and three days for shooting. Cayuga leased a DC-3 and flew the crew each day to the filming site from Santa Monica Airport, landing on a highway near the set.

The first episode of the second season aired on 30 September 1960. Directed by Buzz Kulik, it is also notable for a couple reasons since it is the first episode where Serling appears on camera at the beginning, rather than introducing the episode with a voice-over narration. It was also the first episode to feature the now-familiar *The Twilight Zone* theme music by Marius Constant. At the start,

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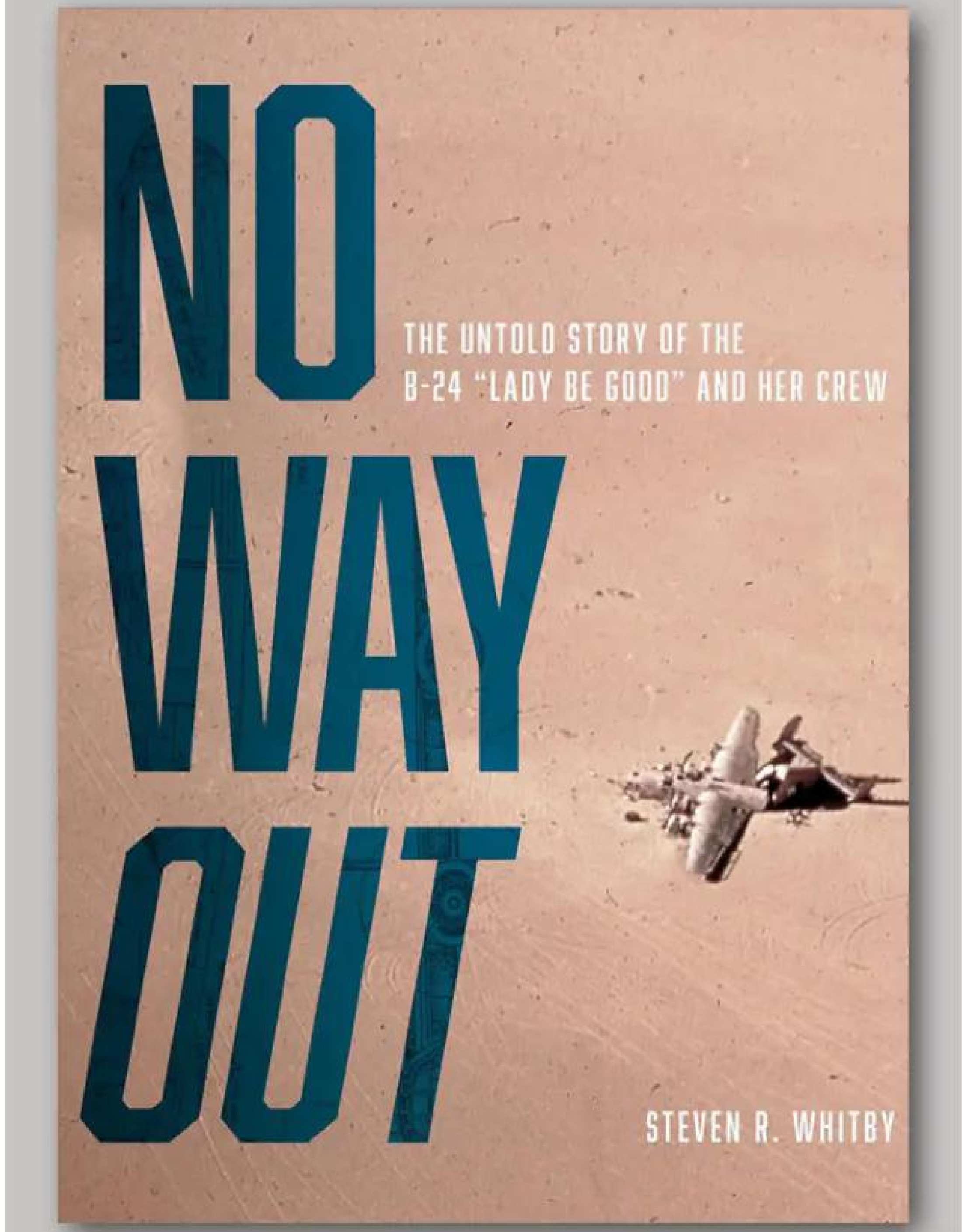


Rod Serling read with fascination about the discovery of the B-24D *Lady Be Good* in the desert along with the mystery of its missing crew. He filed away newspaper clippings and magazine stories on the incident and the search for the crew. All this became the basis for his script "King Nine Will Not Return." Readers desiring the full story of *Lady Be Good* are advised to obtain Steve Whitby's detailed book *No Way Out – The Untold Story of the B-24* Lady Be Good *and Her Crews*. Heavily illustrated with many first-person interviews, the book is a must for anyone interested in this story. Available from the Aviation Book Club for $35, call 818-700-6868 for immediate attention.

Cummings begins his search for the remainder of the missing crew.

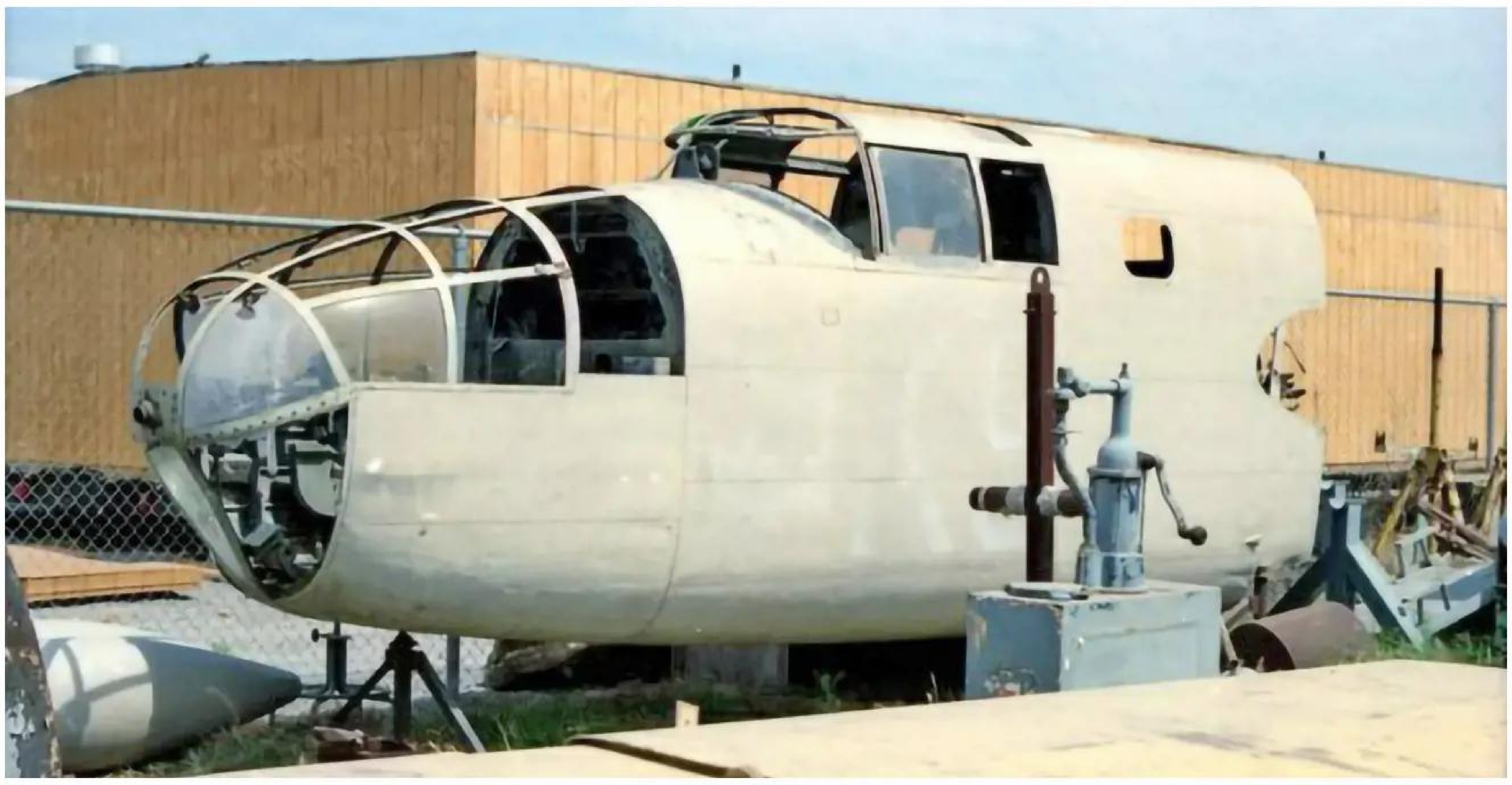
Serling comments: "This is Africa 1943. War spits out its violence overhead, and the sandy graveyard swallows it up. Her name is *King Nine*, B-25, medium bomber, 12th Air Force. On a hot, still morning, she took off from Tunisia to bomb the southern tip of Italy. An errant piece of *flak* tore a hole in the wing tank and, like a wounded bird, this is where she landed, not to return on this day, or any other day."

Once filming was completed, the disassembled Mitchell was trucked back to Hardwick's El Monte yard and stored with his other aeronautical treasures. Editor Michael O'Leary actually visited the yard and we asked him about the experience. "I had gotten my driver's license and heard about this lot in El Monte that had a number of stored WWII aircraft. I set out and found the location and pulled onto a side street, which looked quite promising since there was a fuselage of a Curtiss Jenny and two Spanish Air Force Hispano HA.1112-M1L fighters parked on the street. I went into the office and met Mr. Hardwick, who I knew had raced at the post-war Cleveland races and had also smuggled Mustangs to Israel. I asked if I could take some photographs of the stored planes. The answer was an emphatic 'no.' The area was surrounded by a rotting wooden fence so I drove around back and found that, with a slight push, the fencing gave way. The area was packed full of aircraft and crates of military hardware. Not wanting to get in any trouble, I took some snapshots of the Mitchell, an Allison Mustang, the P-59, and other rare aircraft and then got out

An eerie sequence briefly sees the crew looking toward their downed bomber.

Cummings spots a flight of Cougars overhead, adding to his confusion. It is actually a clip of the Navy's Blue Angels.

Desert sand pours from one of Cummings' shoes while in the hospital, confounding doctors.


The B-25C in storage at Hardwick's yard.

of there. It was an amazing collection and this was just before the beginning of the Warbird Movement."

We knew that Carl Scholl had purchased Hardwick's massive inventory of B-25 components and spares so we got in touch with Carl at his Chino office. "I had gotten interested in B-25s and learned that Hardwick had this huge collection but was in the process of selling it all off since the land was going to be developed.

"I drove out and met with Hardwick and was disappointed to learn that all the B-25 material was going to be sold to a scrapper [Hardwick had been supplying parts to foreign air forces that still operated the type]. However, after some negotiating, we struck a deal and I was able to acquire all the B-25 stuff. That included *King Nine* but I must admit that, at the time, I knew nothing about the particular aircraft nor that it was a rare C model. Moving everything is a story in itself. I was able to trade one of my off-road race engines to a fellow that had the means to move the B-25C and it was trucked to a yard in Reseda along with all the other crates, parts, and pieces.

"This was, of course, the beginning of Aero Trader and before long all the B-25 components were moved to our new desert facility — including the disassembled B-25C. It would soon be joined by other B-25 airframes that we collected from around the country but, at that time, there was no plan to do anything with the C Model except keep it stored. The one exception came when it was used as a backdrop for an album cover shoot for a rock group called 'Survivor.' "

So, the veteran film actor quietly sat in desert storage until the decision was made to move the last surviving B-25B to Aero Trader's Chino facility to begin restoration for Kermit Weeks. At that time, the rear fuselage of *King Nine* was also transported to Chino so that it could be used as a guide for the B-25B rear fuselage rebuild. The two units were placed side-by-side as the workers got busy on the B-25B.

"The work on the B-25B got me thinking about how rare the B-25C is," commented Scholl. "It is an intact airframe and, as we have seen in the Warbird market, rare variants of WWII aircraft are selling for considerably higher prices than the more numerous versions. The same thing can be seen in recent vintage car auctions. For example, the January 2026 Mecum Florida car auction saw rare autos achieve much higher prices than those realized just a year before. I believe the same rapid appreciation is beginning with some of our nearly extinct Warbirds. In our B-25 inventory, we have everything needed to return this B-25C back to the exact condition when it emerged from the North American Inglewood factory over 80 years ago." Those interested in participating in this unique adventure to return the B-25C to the sky should contact Carl Scholl at 909-241-3602. **AC**

EAGLE FIELD
Carl Scholl with the rear fuselage after it had been transferred to Chino.

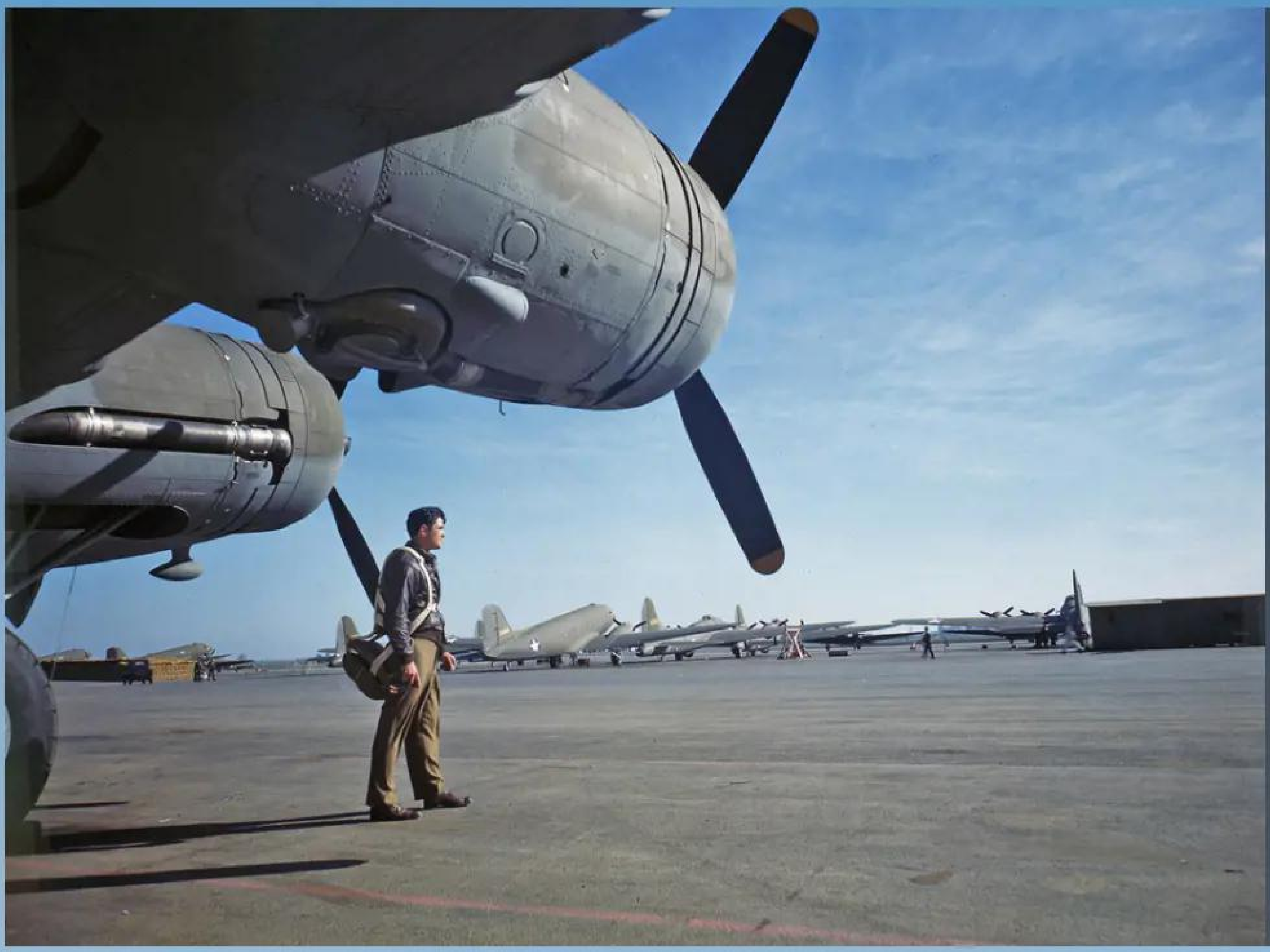
COLORS OF WAR

WE COMB THROUGH OUR ARCHIVES TO PRESENT A SELECTION OF AMERICAN WORLD WAR TWO COMBAT AIRCRAFT IN COLOR

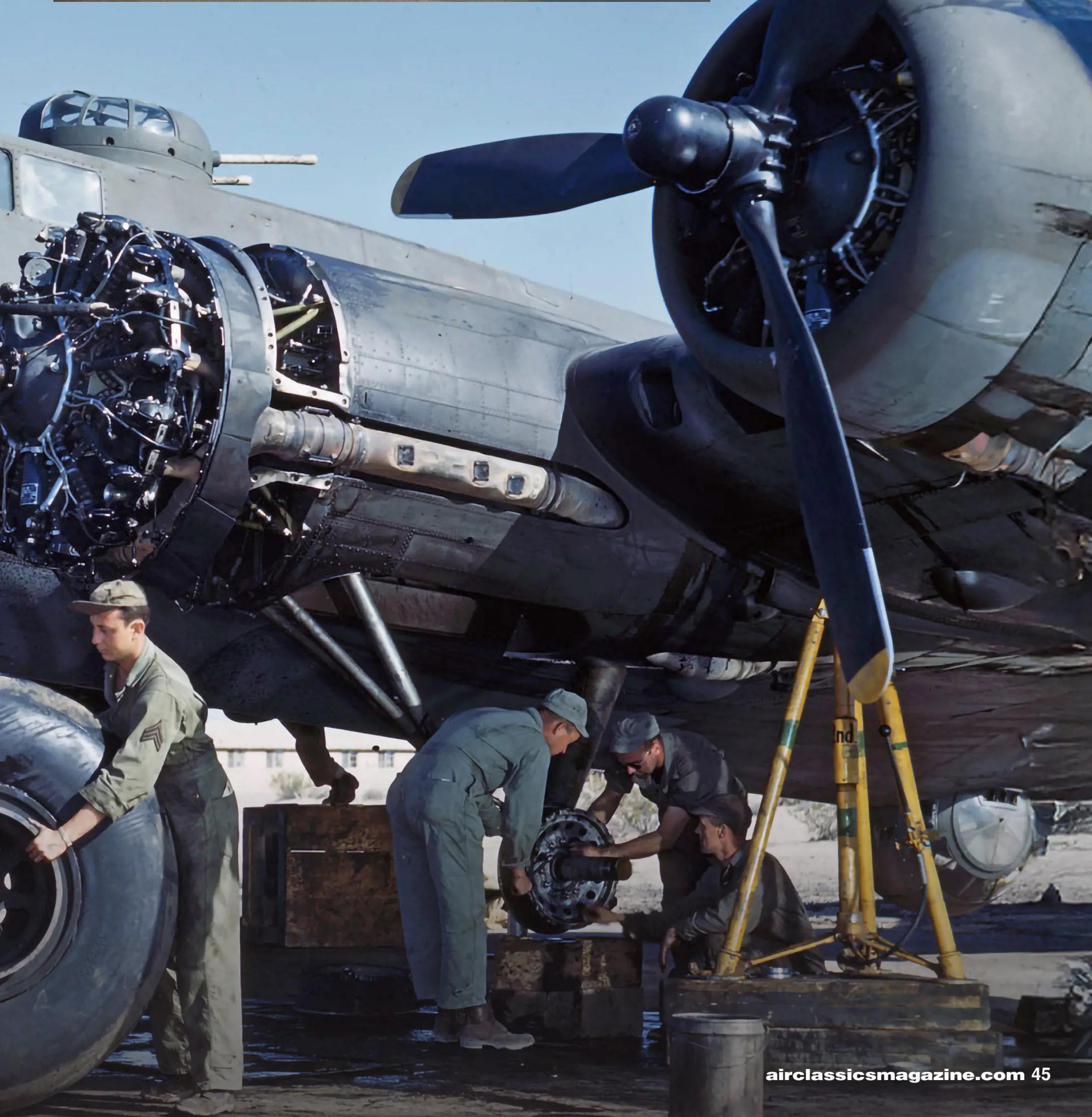
BY MICHAEL O'LEARY

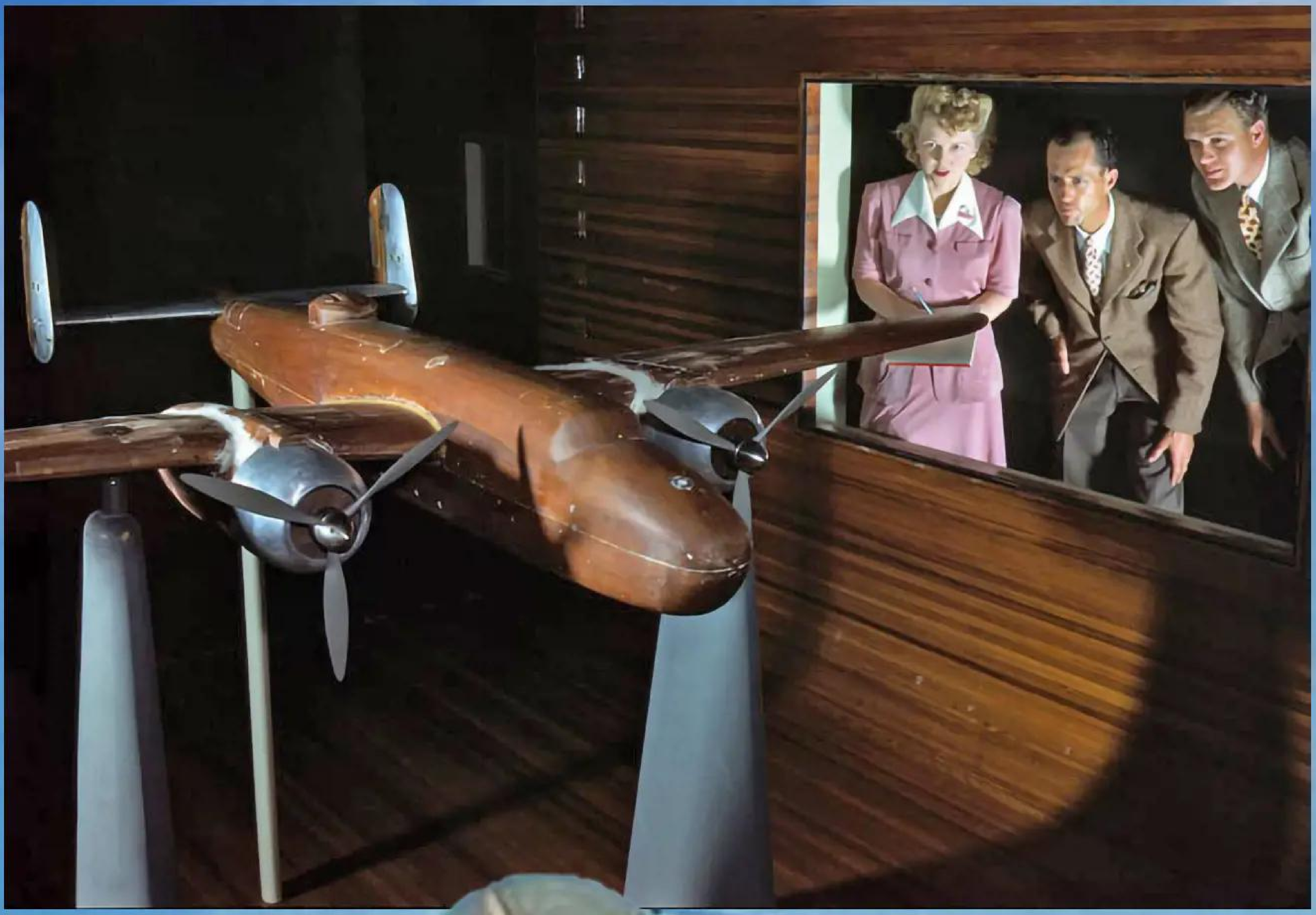
177
U. S. ARMY
CREW WEIGHT 1200

Ground crew performing heavy maintenance on a Boeing B-17E Flying Fortress including the changing of a main tire, which was not an easy task. Assigned to a Stateside training squadron, these Fortresses were subjected to lots of hard flying and maintenance was frequent. This view gives an excellent depiction for all the work that was required to keep a Fortress flying.

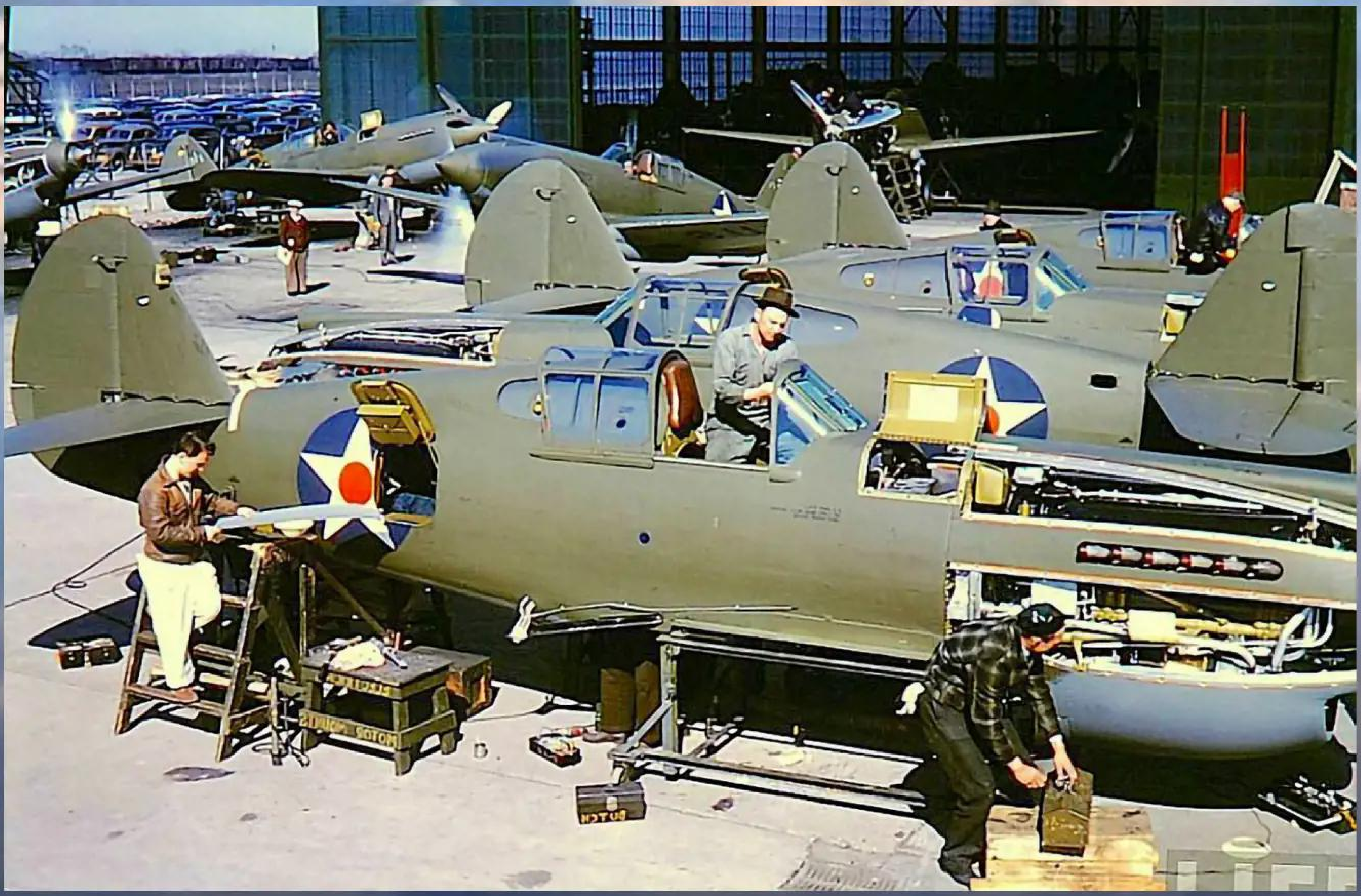


A B-17E instructor pilot looks out on a Texas training base ramp full of Flying Fortresses and Douglas C-47s.





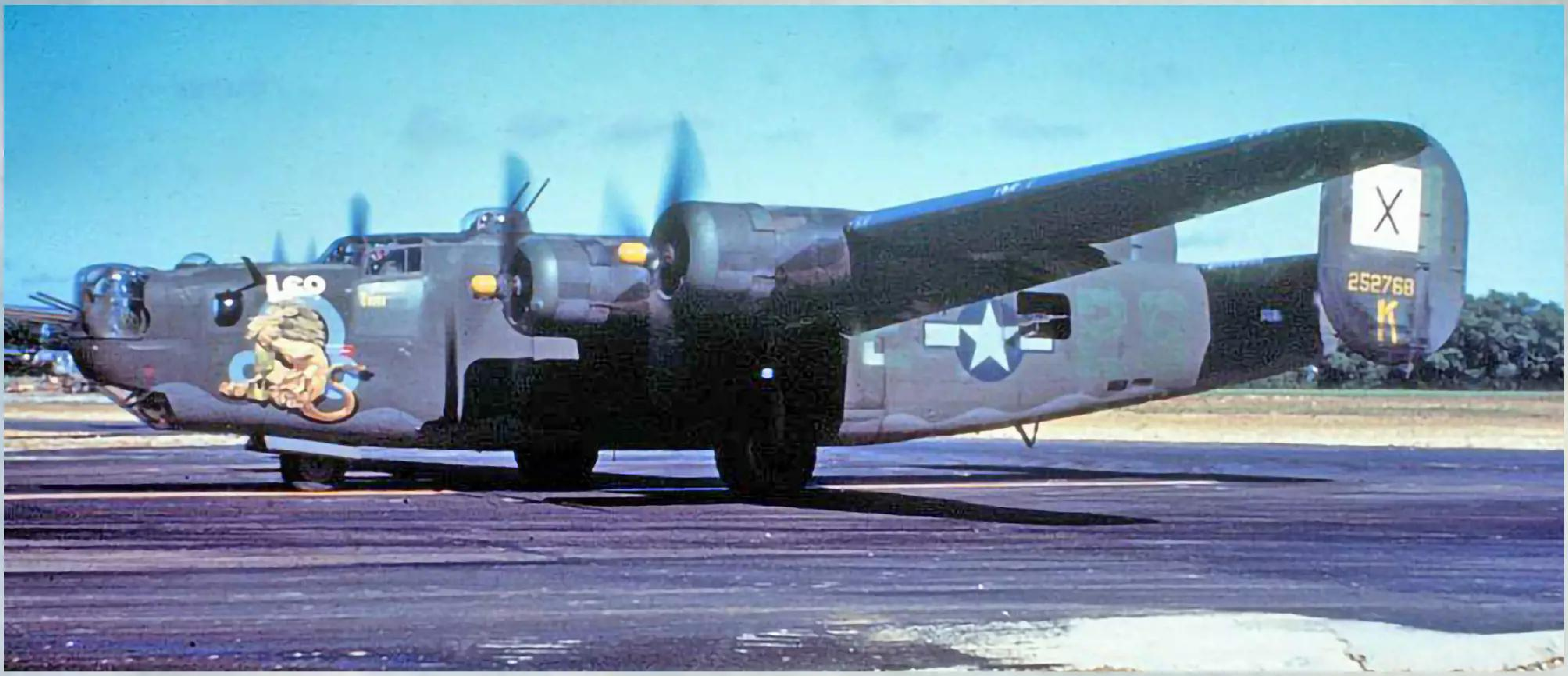
An interesting view of a large scale North American B-25G Mitchell undergoing testing in the company's Inglewood wind tunnel. These large models were made of wood and metal and performed useful aerodynamic tests.



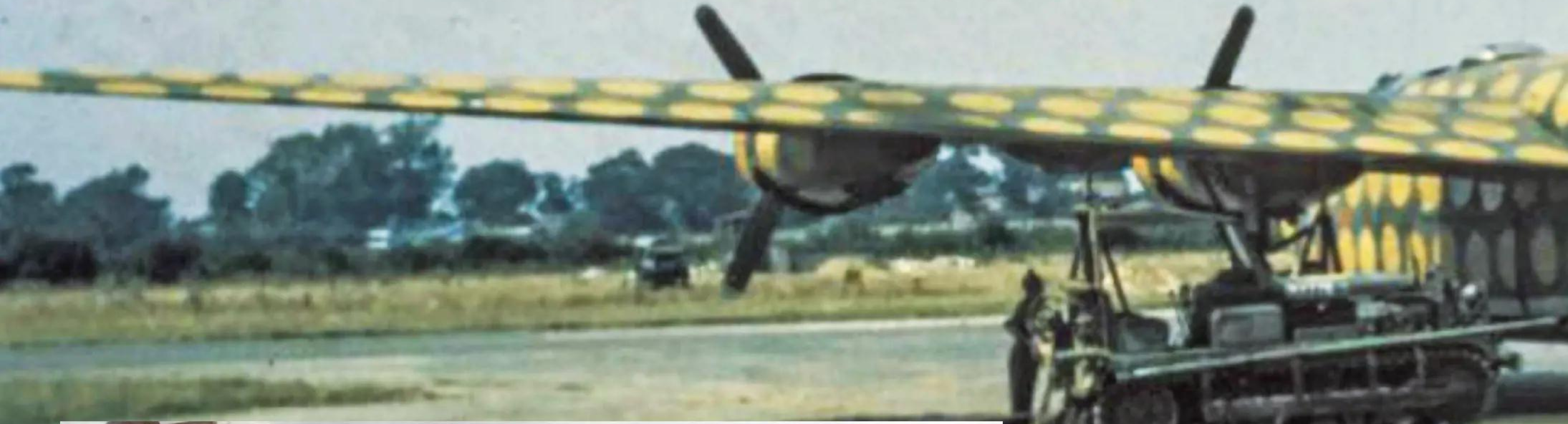
Work underway at the Curtiss factory on assembling P-40B Tomahawk fighters. Orders were pouring into the Curtiss plant and space was at a premium so some of the work had to be performed outdoors.

Armament test for a de Havilland Mosquito. Photographed at twilight, the testing of the four 20mm cannon and four .303-caliber machine guns made for an imposing sight.

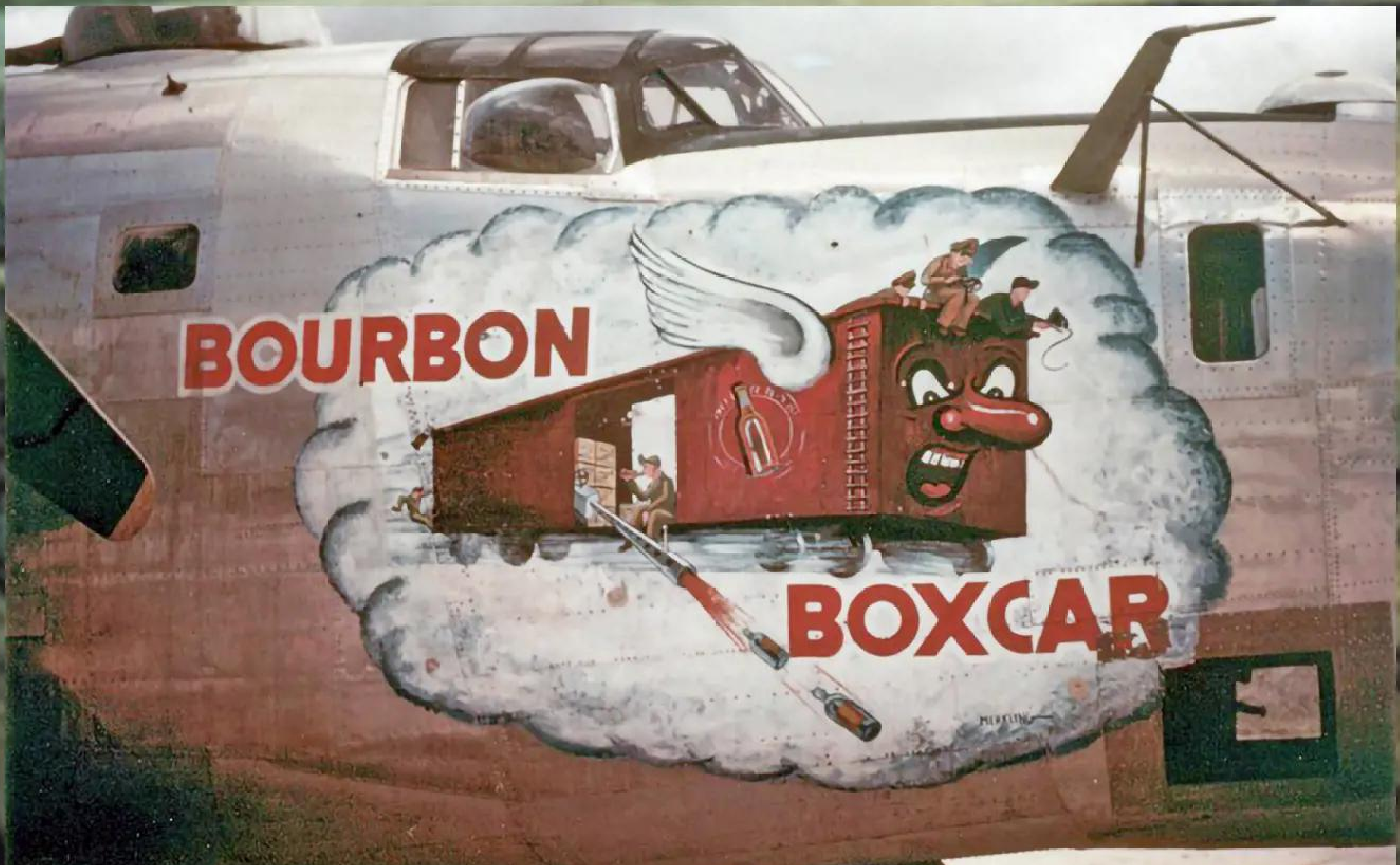
It looks almost peaceful, but it wasn't. Tri-color camouflage Curtiss SB2C-3 Helldivers from VB-2 were photographed in formation on 24 August 1944. The dive-bombers had launched from the USS *Hornet* (CV-12) that was part of TF-58 for a raid on Saipan. The rear gunners have their .50-caliber weapons at the ready.



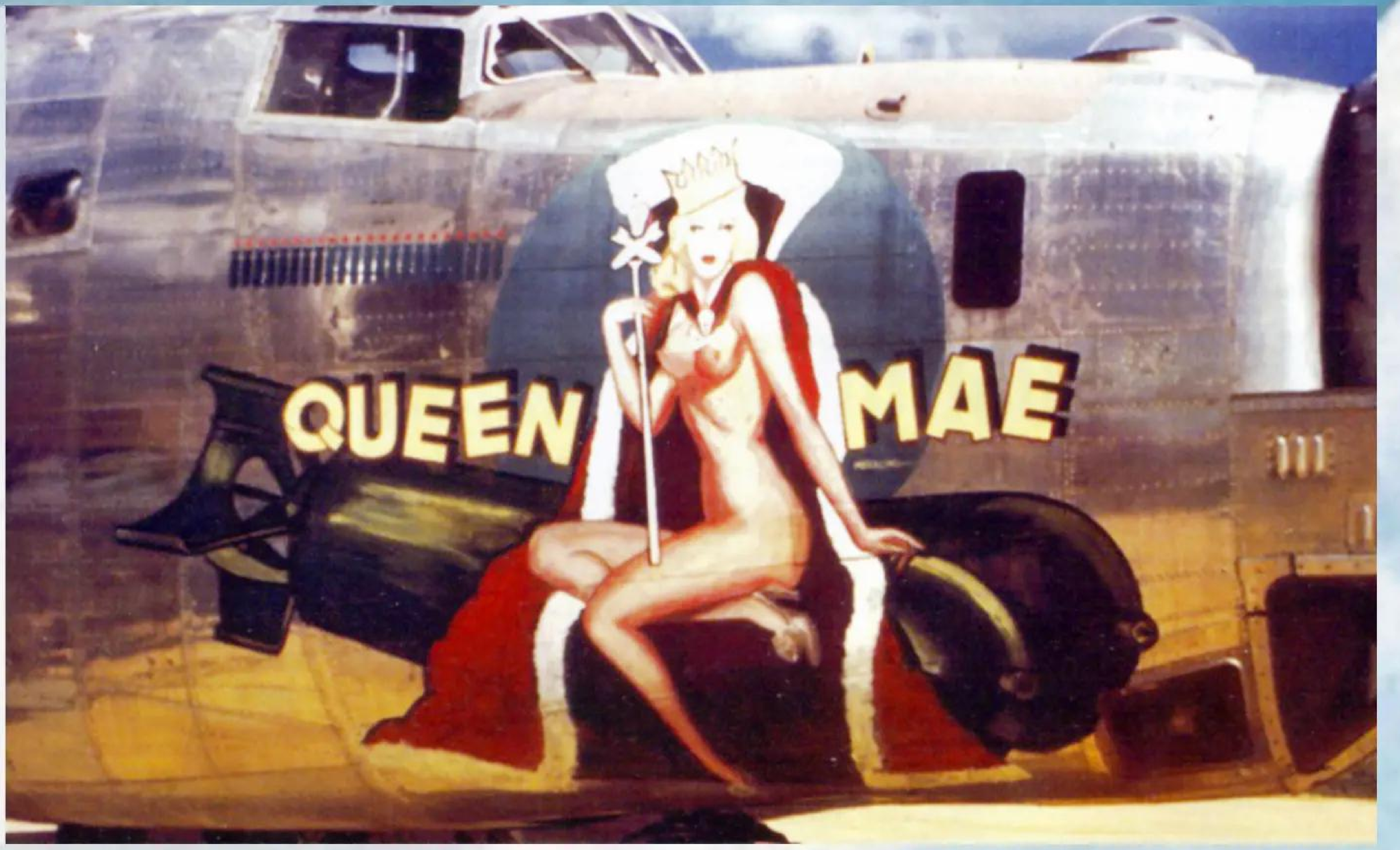
Ford-built B-24H-15-FO USAAF 42-52768 *Leo* prepares for takeoff. The Liberator was assigned to the 834th Bomb Squadron, 486th Bomb Group (a second *Leo* was also done after the first was transferred to another unit and it was B-24H-15-CF 41-29605). The distinctive "Leo the Lion" nose art was painted by squadron artist Phillip S. Brinkman. The 834th BS was known as the "Zodiac Squadron" since the unit's dozen B-24s all had signs of the zodiac painted on their noses. Corporal Brinkman, a former illustrator of a Chicago-based advertising agency, painted all the art. Captain W.D. Howell discovered Brinkman and his art while stationed at Tucson and made arrangements to have him assigned to the 834th. Once in the United Kingdom, Brinkman began painting the nose art and eleven of the dozen bombers were finished. The squadron flew 49 missions with B-24s before transferring to B-17s and, during that time, none of the zodiac aircraft were lost in combat. The last Liberator was *Taurus* but Brinkman could not get it done even after three tries because the plane was always on assignment and then the unit moved to B-17s.



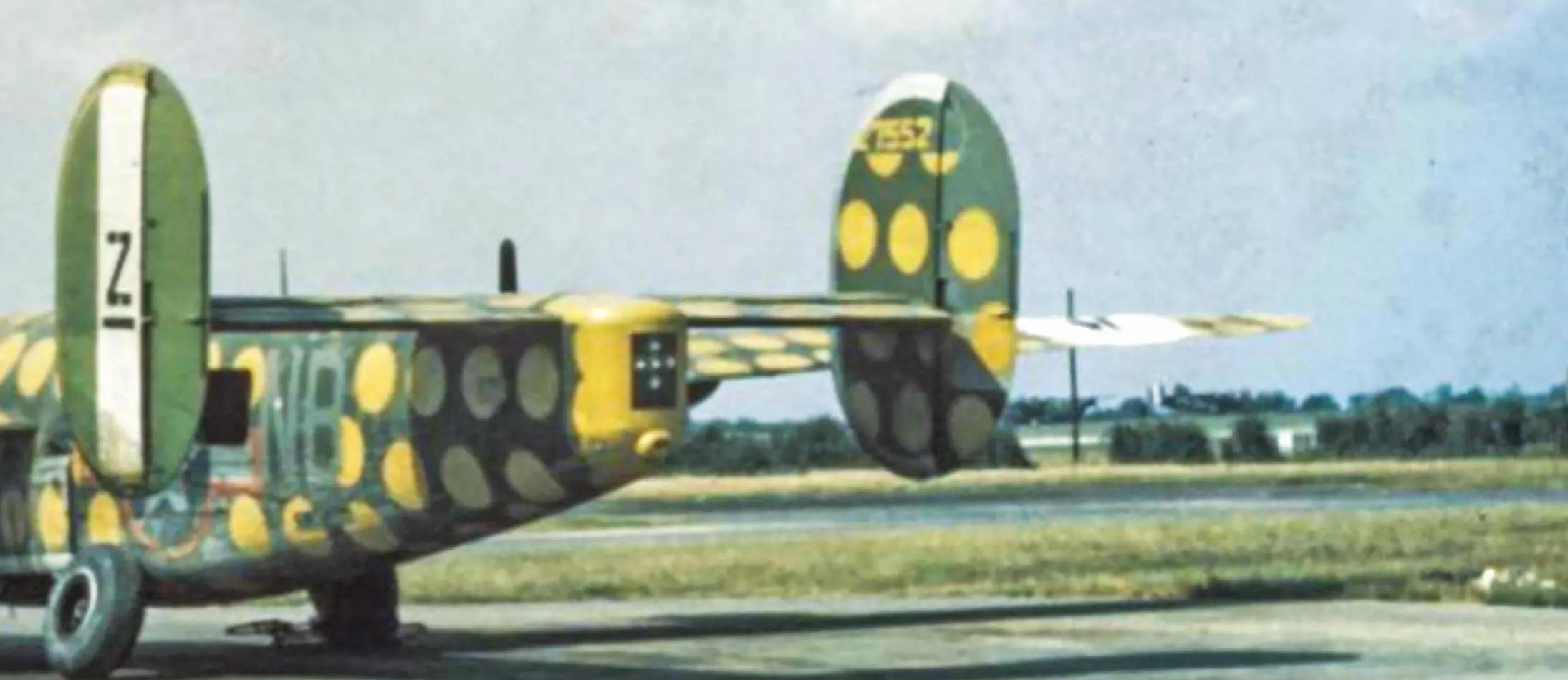
Consolidated B-24H Liberator USAAF 42-7552 was initially assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group but was then reassigned to the 44th Bomb Group prior to seeing combat operations. It then went to the 57th Bomb Group where it was converted to an assembly ship. This meant most of the combat gear was removed and, as can be seen, the bomber was given a very distinctive paint scheme along with numerous flashing lights. An assembly ship would take off first and then orbit near the airfield as other bombers lifted off to form on the aircraft before the group headed out to its assigned target. Once the aircraft were assembled in formation and on their way to Occupied Europe or Germany, the assembly ship would break formation and return to base. Named *Lil' Cookie*, this Liberator was scrapped at the end of the war.



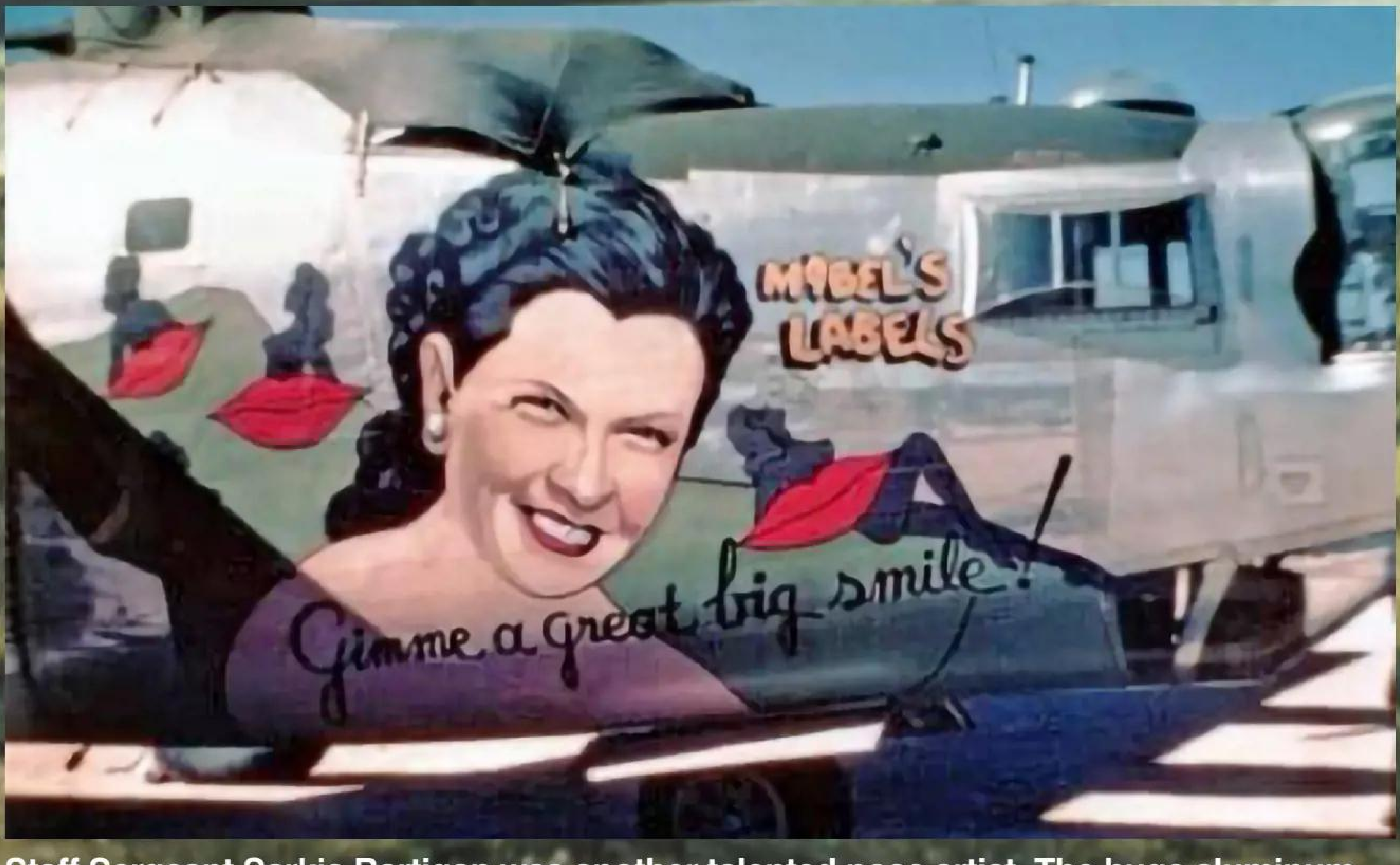
Bourbon Boxcar was another impressive piece of nose art created by Al Merkling. This was an F-7A photo recon Liberator (converted from a B-24J-5-CO) with the serial 42-73048 and it was also assigned to the 20th Combat Mapping Squadron.



Queen Mae was B-24J-155-CO 44-40314 assigned to the 319th Bomb Squadron, 90th Bomb Group, and the art was painted by a very creative fellow — Corporal Al Merkling (1909-1999). He also painted many other Liberators and his art was large and impressive. Born in Philadelphia, he paid his way through art school by doing paintings for tourists on the Atlantic City boardwalk. When he was drafted, Merkling was assigned to the 20th Combat Mapping Squadron in New Guinea where he worked as a lab technician. His talent for nose art was soon discovered and he began painting many aircraft. After the American invasion of the Philippines, the 90th operated against numerous Japanese targets. *Queen Mae* survived the war but was scrapped at Clark Field along with hundreds of other USAAF aircraft.

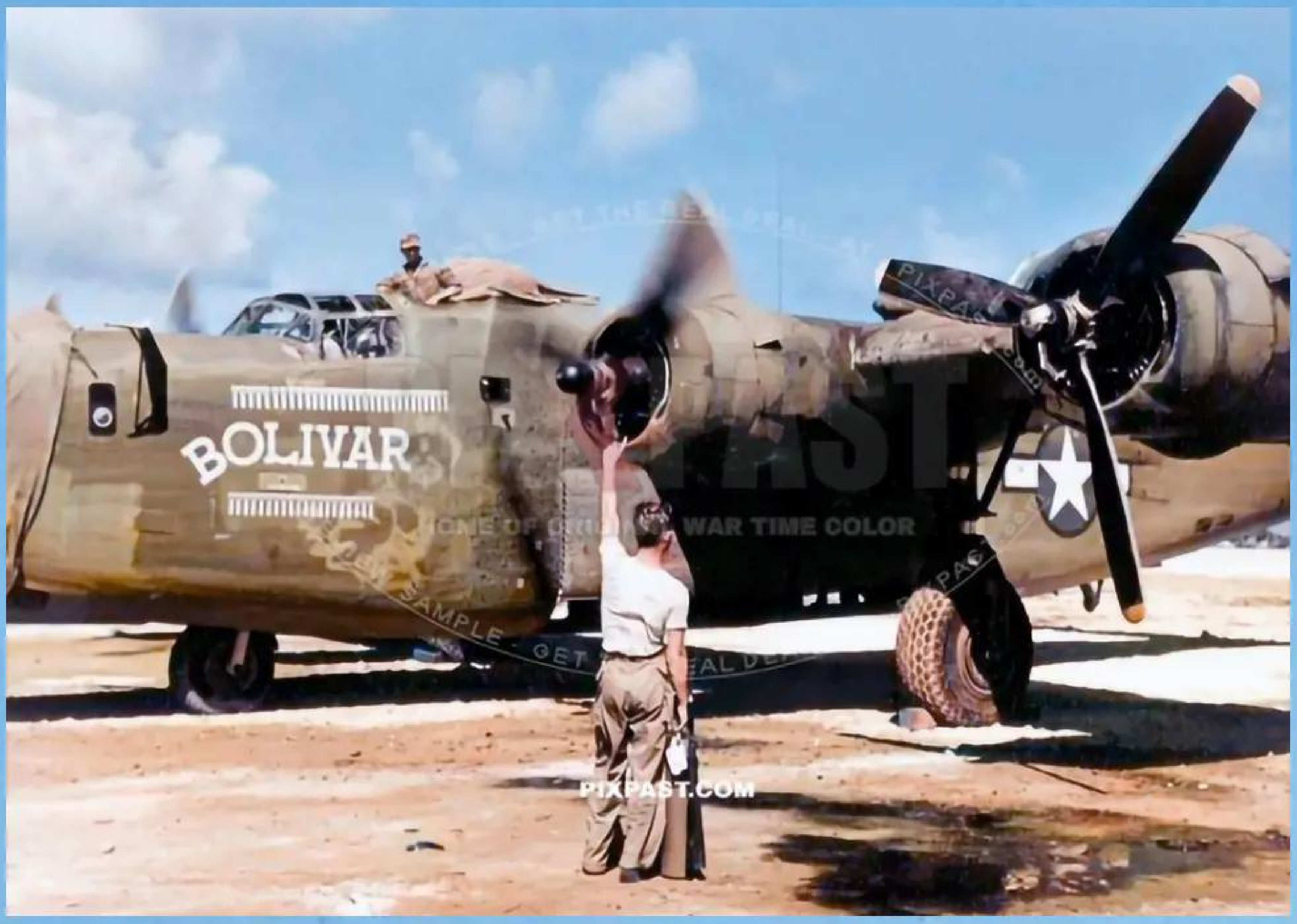


CENTERSPREAD: Classic portrait of a Mustang pilot and his crew. First Lieutenant Gordon Reeves flew this P-51B Mustang with the 382nd Fighter Squadron, 363rd Fighter Group, and the plane was photographed at a forward airfield in Normandy following the D-Day landings — hence the crewmen wearing GI steel helmets. Finished in Olive Drab/Neutral Gray camouflage, the white identification bands are clearly visible along with the D-Day invasion stripes under the wing (the top surfaces had been painted over by this point). The name *Printer's Devil* was very neatly applied and refers to the fact that Reeves' father was a printer in Oregon and the pilot, as a young man, was a printer's apprentice hence the nickname. The fighter has been retrofitted with a Malcolm Hood and the Mustang was obviously kept in very fine condition by a dedicated ground crew.



Staff Sergeant Sarkis Bartigan was another talented nose artist. The huge aluminum "canvas" of the Liberator allowed him to do outsized art on the aircraft of the 6th Bomb Squadron, 43rd Bomb Group, at Ie Shima. *Mabel's Labels — Gimme a great big smile!* was one of his more impressive pieces. The aircraft survived the war only to be flown to Kingman, Arizona, and scrapped.

Printer's Devil



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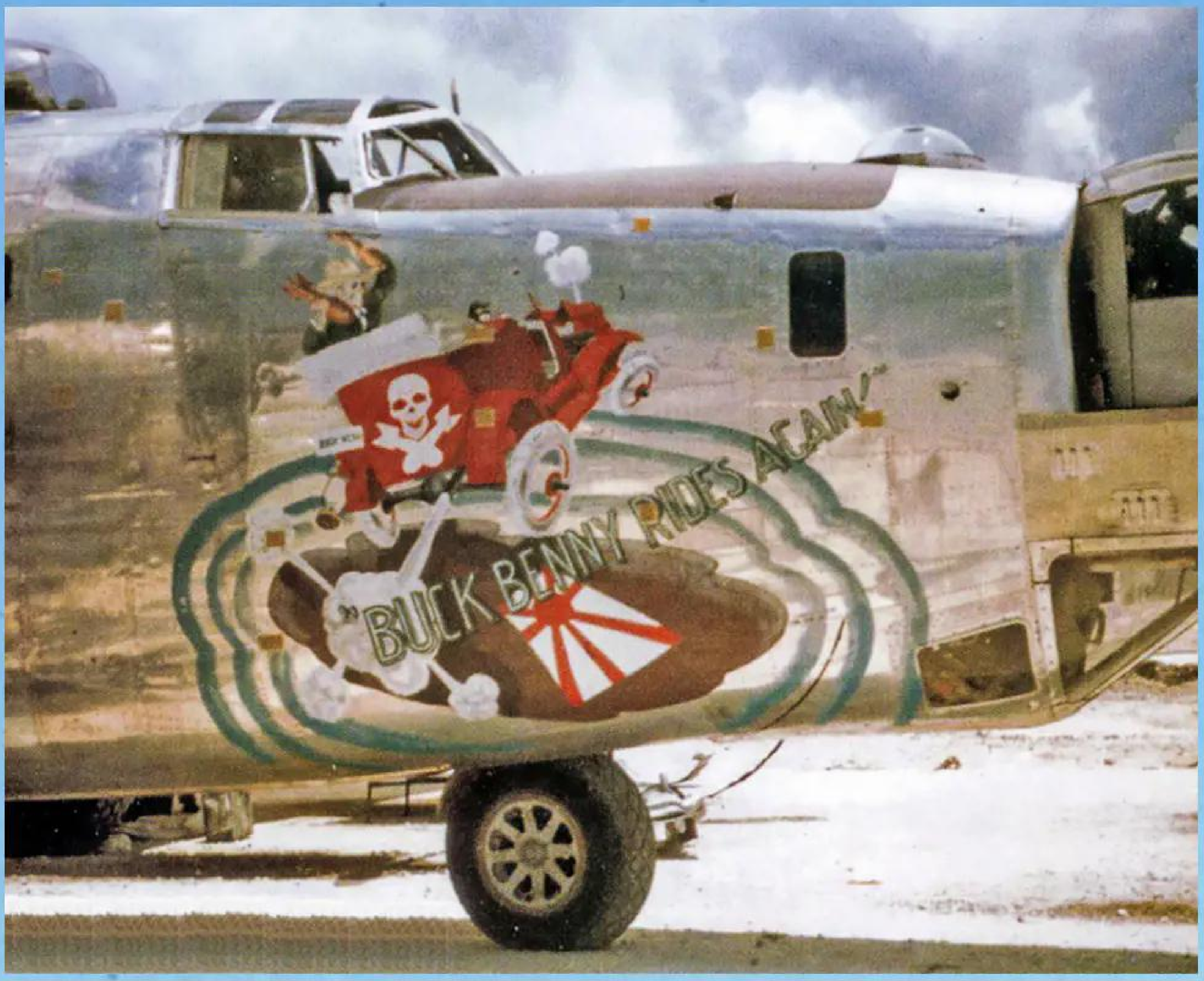
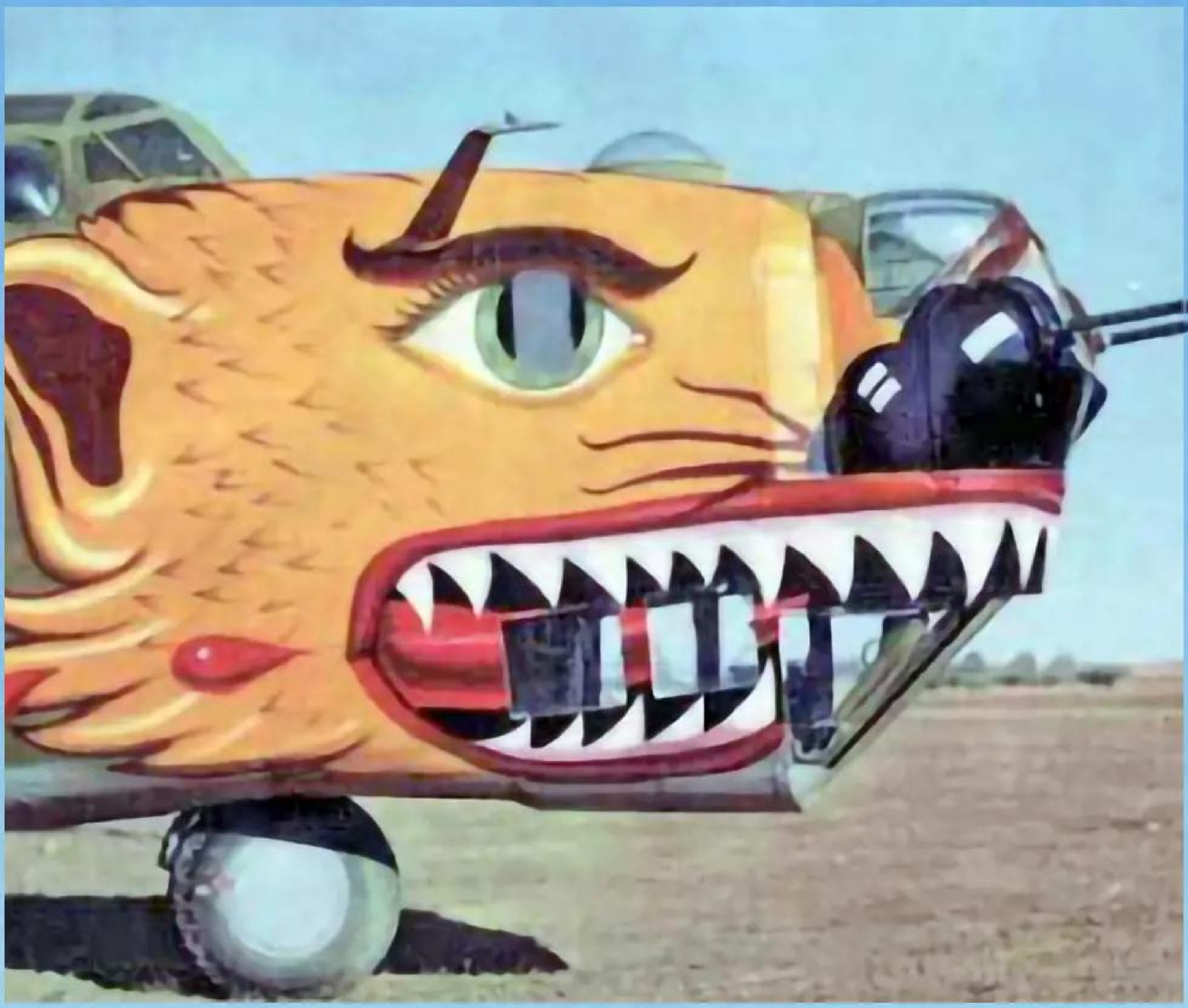
B-24J USAAF 42-72994 *Bolivar* assigned to the 27th Bomb Squadron, 30th Bomb Group. Since the aircraft had compiled 81 combat missions with three different flight crews in the Pacific, it was decided to fly the veteran back to the States so it could participate in a War Bond Tour. However, on 10 November 1944, *Bolivar* crashed while landing at Vultee Field, Downey, Los Angeles. The wreck was trucked away to a scrap yard.

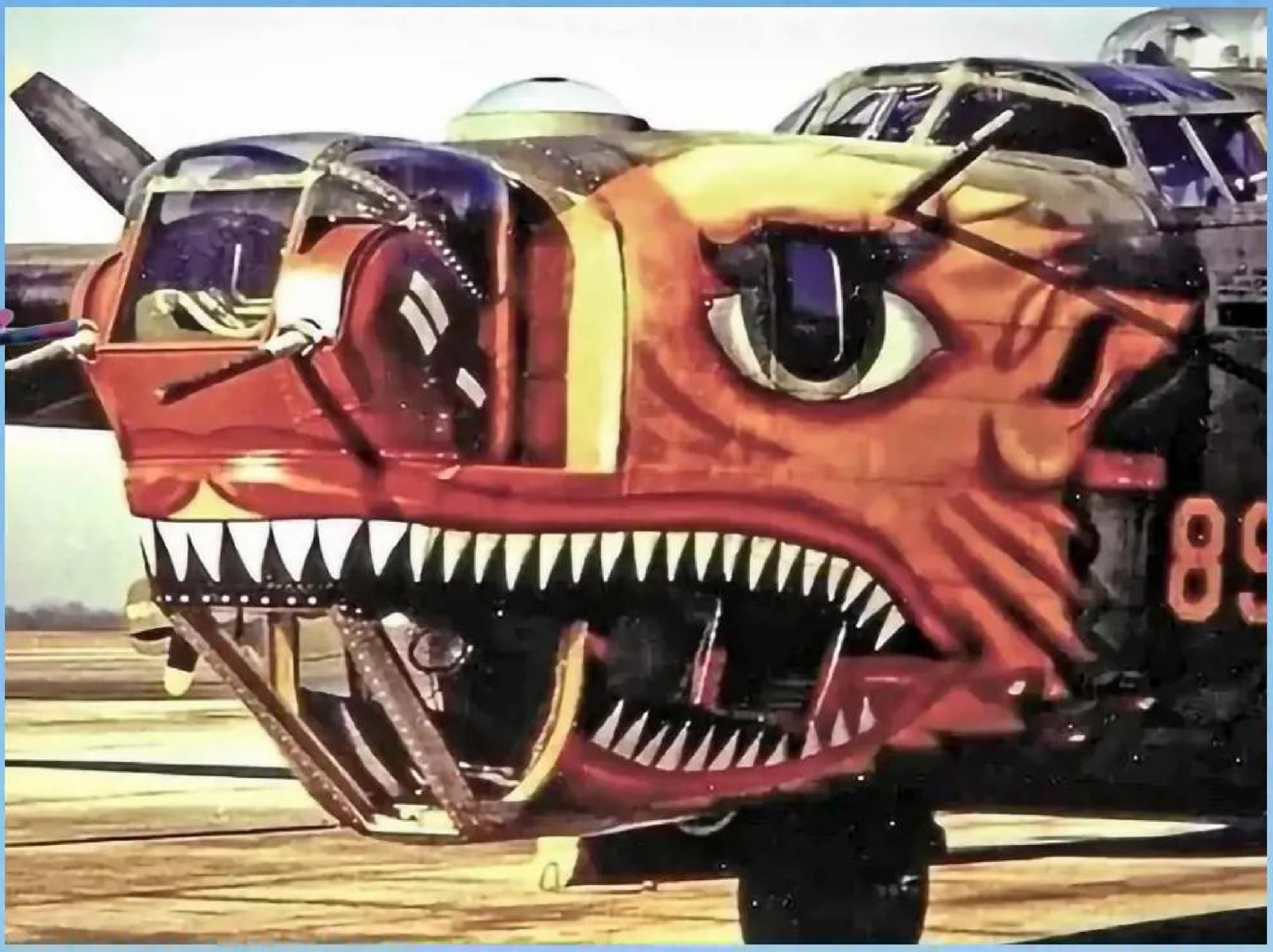


"BUCK BENNY RIDES AGAIN!" was the elaborate nose art applied to B-24J-155-CO 44-40340 of the 400th Bomb Squadron, 90th Bomb Group, 5th Air Force. The name is in reference to a now obscure 1940 film that was a western comedy starring Jack Benny and Ellen Drew.

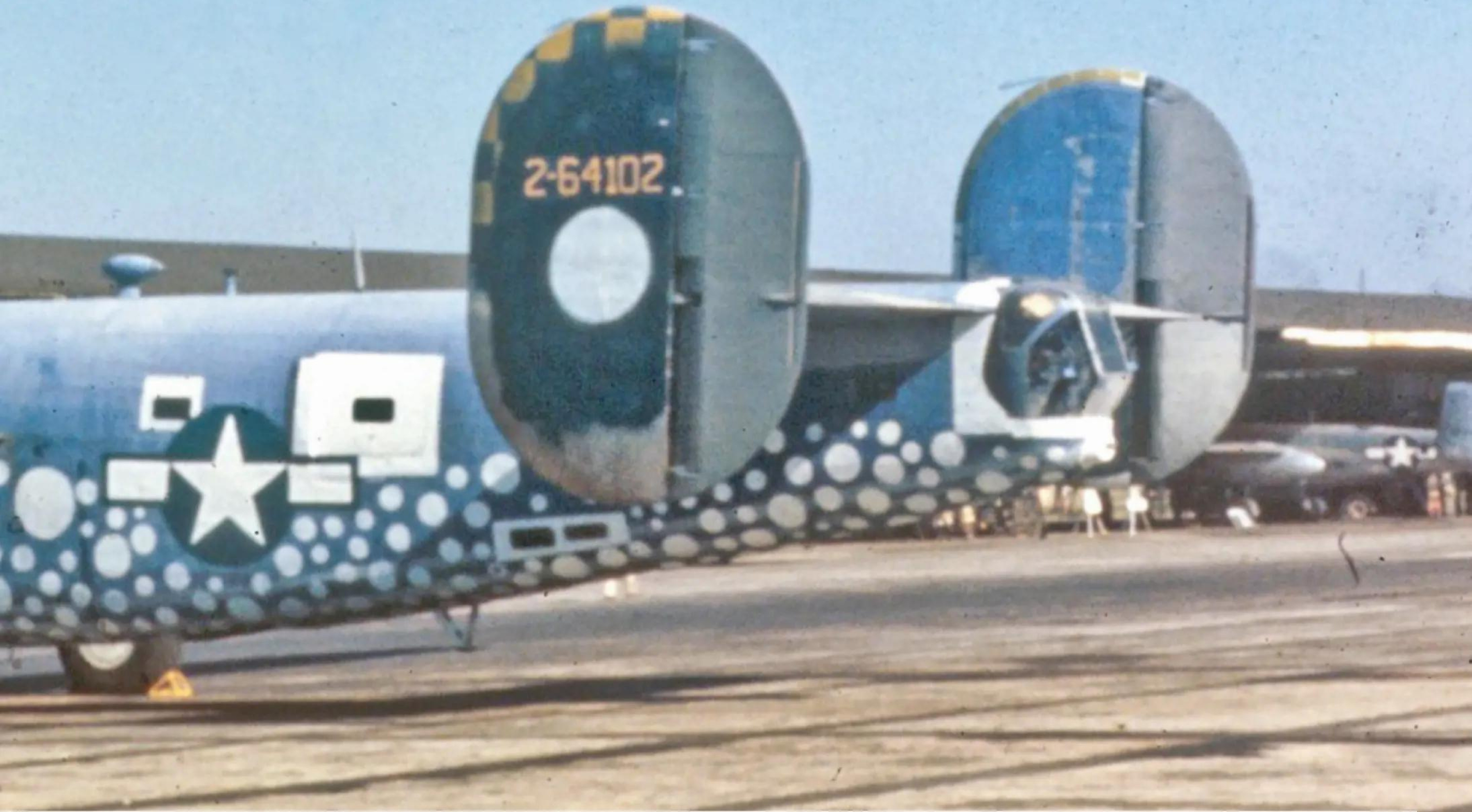
During the 1930s and early 1940s, there was a certain fascination within various military elements of finding a paint or camouflage scheme that would render and aircraft "invisible." The combat advantages of an aircraft finished in such a scheme are obvious and many different paints and designs were tried but virtually all were failures in their intended invisibility. One paint that did come somewhat close carried two different names: "Haze Paint" and "Synthetic Haze Paint." This is a complex story and it originally applied to Lockheed F-4 Lightning photo recon aircraft but it was also used on other types. Around 130 F-4s received these little-known schemes. While the Battle of Britain raged, paint manufacturer Samuel Cabot in Massachusetts contacted the Air Corps about a new white paint that they felt had military applications. The new paint was a colloidal solution of zinc oxide in oil and the pigment grains had a diameter below the wavelength of blue or violet light. The paint makers at Cabot had come up with a theory that by spraying this color (which had a stock number of L31340) over an aircraft that had been painted overall dark blue or black, then only blue and violet would be reflected. In theory, all other colors of the spectrum would be absorbed by the aircraft's base coat and depending on sky condition and angle, then the aircraft would be very difficult to spot. Scientists at MIT agreed with Cabot's findings and in late 1941 a Republic P-43 and possible a North American O-47 were painted in the new scheme. Testing was encouraging and Lockheed was ordered to paint all its F-4s in what became known as "Haze Paint." It was a complex scheme and it was not easy to apply. Drawings were created to show how the Haze Paint would be applied in a shadow shading or countershading system. Haze Paint in thicker layers would be applied to shadow areas (undersurfaces) after the entire aircraft had been given a coat of black paint. A light coat of Haze Paint would go on the upper surfaces to produce a very dark blue. The heavy spray in the shadowed areas gave a finish that was graded from a light blue to a near white. The



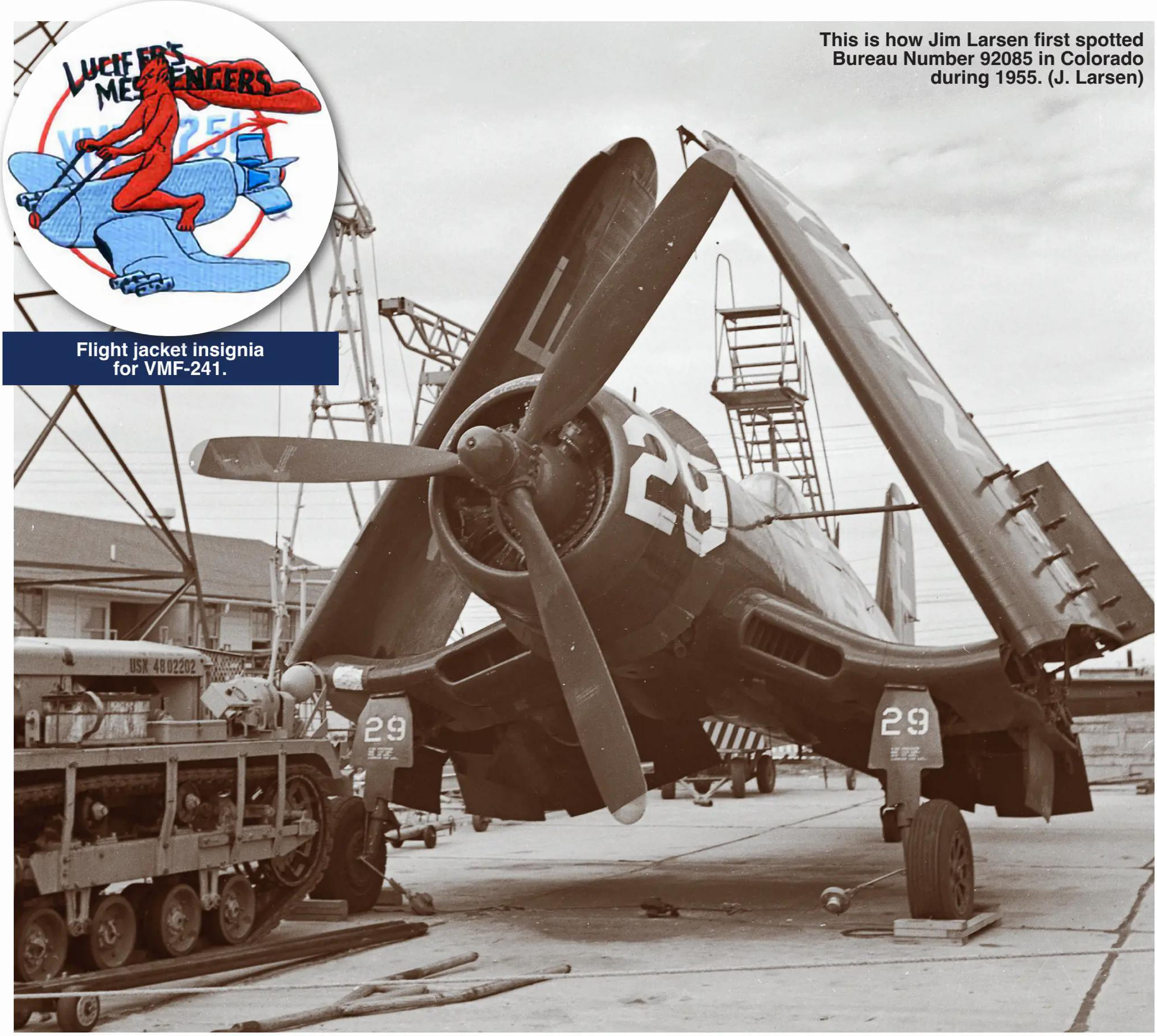
Jungle Pussy was B-24D-165-CO 42-40503 with upgraded nose armament and extremely elaborate nose art. The Liberator was assigned to the 374th Bomb Squadron, 308th Bomb Group, 14th Air Force.



Left side view of *Jungle Pussy*. The plane came to an end on 4 December 1944 when it ran out of fuel during a ferry flight from Suichwan to Chengkung, China. Fighter control at Chengkung heard a radio message reporting the crew bailing out east of Kunming. They gave no exact location but believed they were over friendly territory and within walking distance of base. All five crewmen returned to base without incident.



fuselage pod and twin booms were mottled in Haze Paint. It could only be applied in daylight hours and, being oil-based, took some twelve hours to dry. The paint was also toxic, and crews working long hours became sick. Sunlight and weather also played havoc on the colors, causing them to change and heavily weather. Attempts were made to address some of these problems and that included applying a paint called “Cloudmist” that was lacquer-based but it had an extremely rough finish. An enamel named “Ken-Haze” was also tried and rejected. Further testing showed that Haze Paint was only marginally superior and orders were issued to finish the F-4s in standard Olive Drab/Neutral Gray. However, in the field, combat pilots reported that the Haze Paint gave them a slight advantage. This led to the development of Synthetic Haze Paint and this consisted of the aircraft receiving a base coat of a color called “Deep Sky” and named “Sky Base Blue.” Over this went “Flight Blue,” which was a synthetic haze enamel called “Flight White” tinted to the correct shade. An F-5A was picked to receive the scheme and overall it was quite subtle, appearing at first to be a solid single coat of paint. Aerial tests with observers in a B-17 did not spot the F-5A until it closed to within a thousand feet. So, by March 1943 the Synthetic Haze Paint was standardized for F-5A/F-5B Lightnings. It is not known how many aircraft were painted this way but in the field many photo-recon Lightnings were simply painted from stocks of Royal Air Force Photo Recon Unit Blue. All that aside, we come to this very interesting F-7A Liberator (ex-B-24J-1-CF) USAAF 42-64012 named *Nosie Rosie*. Assigned to the 24th Combat Mapping Squadron, 8th Photo Reconnaissance Group, 10th Air Force, the Liberator appears to have been given a Synthetic Haze camouflage scheme with the very curious addition of dozens of undersurface “polka dots.” Try as we might, we could not find any technical orders pertaining to this color scheme on F-7As so we do not know if this aircraft was unique or one of several. **AC**



This is how Jim Larsen first spotted Bureau Number 92085 in Colorado during 1955. (J. Larsen)

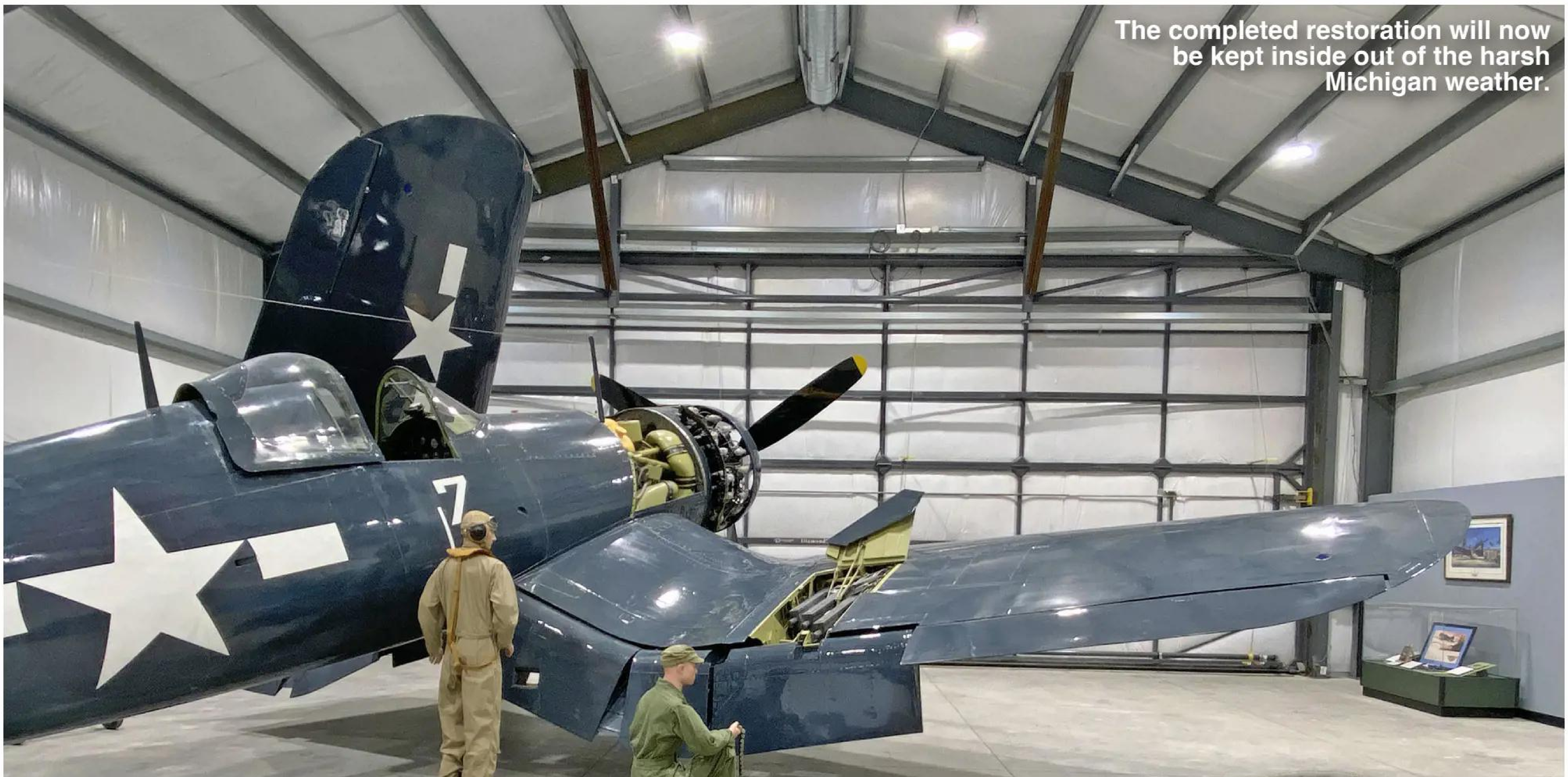
Flight jacket insignia for VMF-241.

BACK TO FORMER GLORY

THE LONG ROAD UNDERTAKEN BY A GOODYEAR FG-1D BEFORE A DEDICATED BAND OF RESTORERS BROUGHT THE FAMED FIGHTER TO STATIC MUSEUM DISPLAY CONDITION

BY STEVE SIBAL AND ED KAMINSKI

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the February 2021"Airlines," we ran a couple Corsair photographs taken by Jim Larsen. As a young aviation enthusiast, Jim was at Buckley AFB near Denver looking for interesting aircraft to photograph. He was surprised to come across a completely intact Goodyear FG-1D Corsair. At the time, Jim commented "I first saw this FG-1D during at airshow at Naval Air Station Denver [to become Buckley AFB] about 1955. The Corsair was parked on the side of the ramp where spectators entered on their way to the show. It wasn't part of the show — it was simply parked there. At the time, there were Bearcats, SNBs, and TBMs operating with the Naval Reserve at the field. When I returned to the field a couple years later, the Cosair had been moved to the infield where it was starting to look a bit bedraggled and the prop was missing. By this time, the NAR was flying Grumman Cougars." Well, *Air Classics* readers are nothing if not dedicated to finding answers to aviation mysteries and by the next issue we had an answer thanks to Jeff King and other readers. What follows is the story of a Corsair that, against all odds, survived to become a museum display.



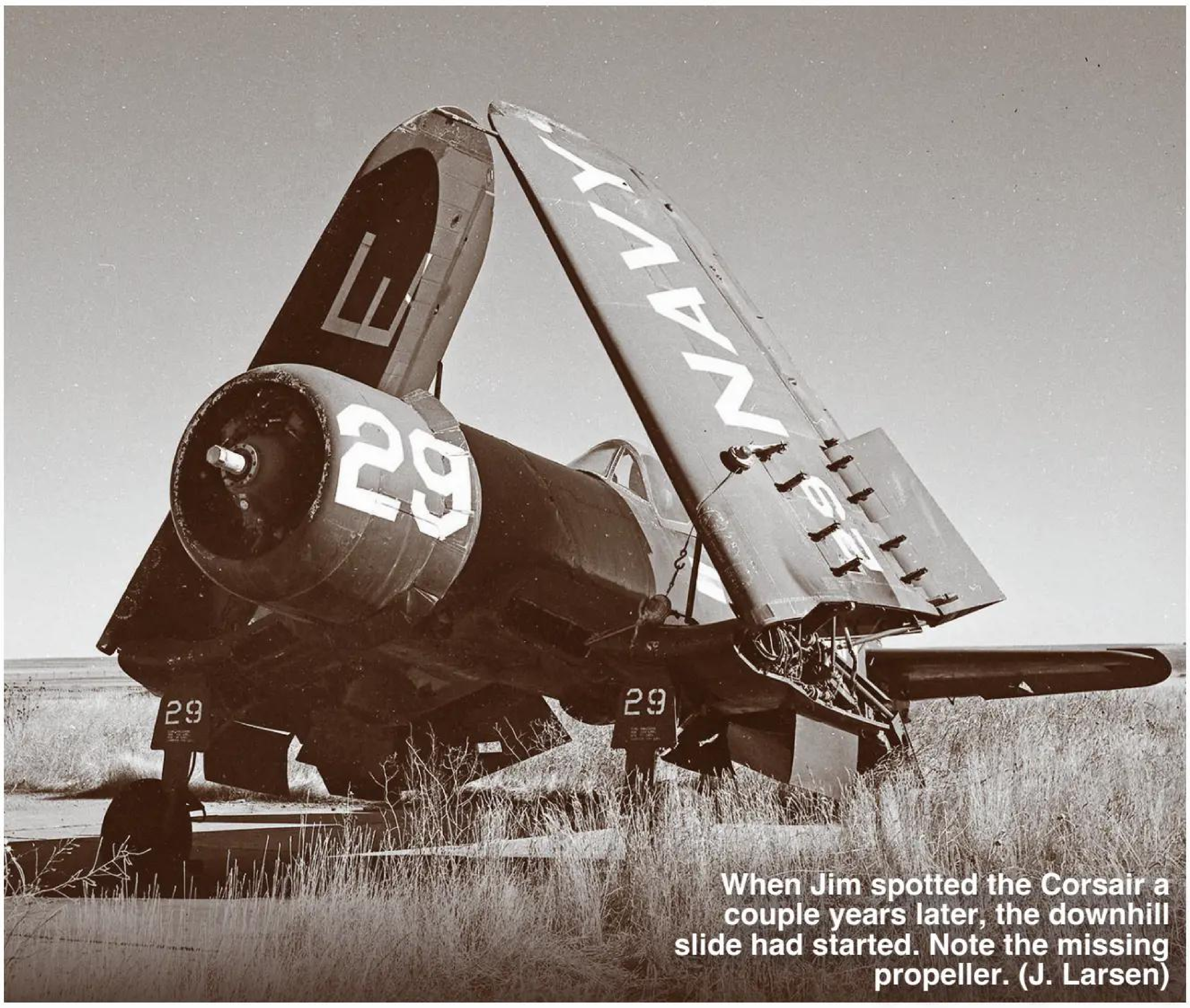
The completed restoration will now be kept inside out of the harsh Michigan weather.

NARTU
SEATTLE

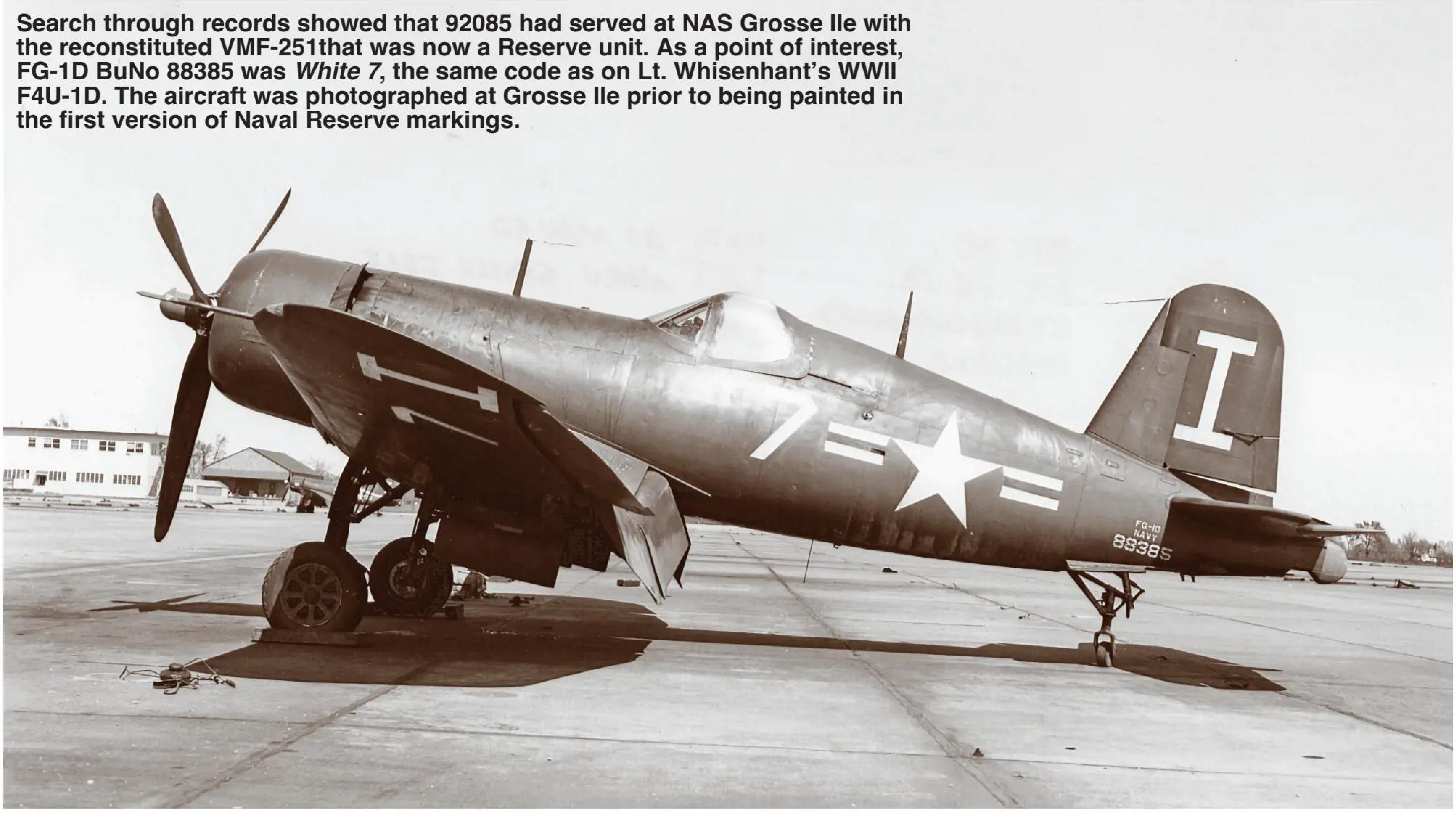
Naval Air Reserve Training Command Seattle flight jacket patch showing Corsairs against a traditional totem.

After a long and tortuous journey from near oblivion to resurrection, Chance Vought/Goodyear FG-1D Corsair BuNo 92085 has been restored and is now on display at the Selfridge Military Air Museum (SMAM), located on Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Michigan. The museum's FG-1D was built by Goodyear Aircraft in Akron, Ohio, and accepted by the Navy in May 1945. It served various Naval Air Stations stateside and in Hawaii until 1959 when it was declared surplus and placed in Antelope Park in Lincoln, Nebraska. Time, weather and vandals took their toll and 92085 eventually ended up as a gunnery target at Yuma, Arizona. In 1976, the aircraft was discovered by retired B/Gen. Robert Raisch, USMCR, who took the initiative to rescue and transport it to Selfridge with the intent of restoration.

The Corsair was accepted by the Navy on 22 May 1945 and was flown from Akron to NAS San Diego. At that location, the fighter went into one of the aircraft pools at the base while it awaited assignment to an active-duty squadron. Once again, we do not have specific information but we do know that after the war it was serving at Barbers Point in Hawaii. Returned Stateside, the aircraft underwent an overhaul and was then assigned to the Naval Reserve, serving at NAR Columbus before going to NAR New York where it operated until September 1949. It may have gone to



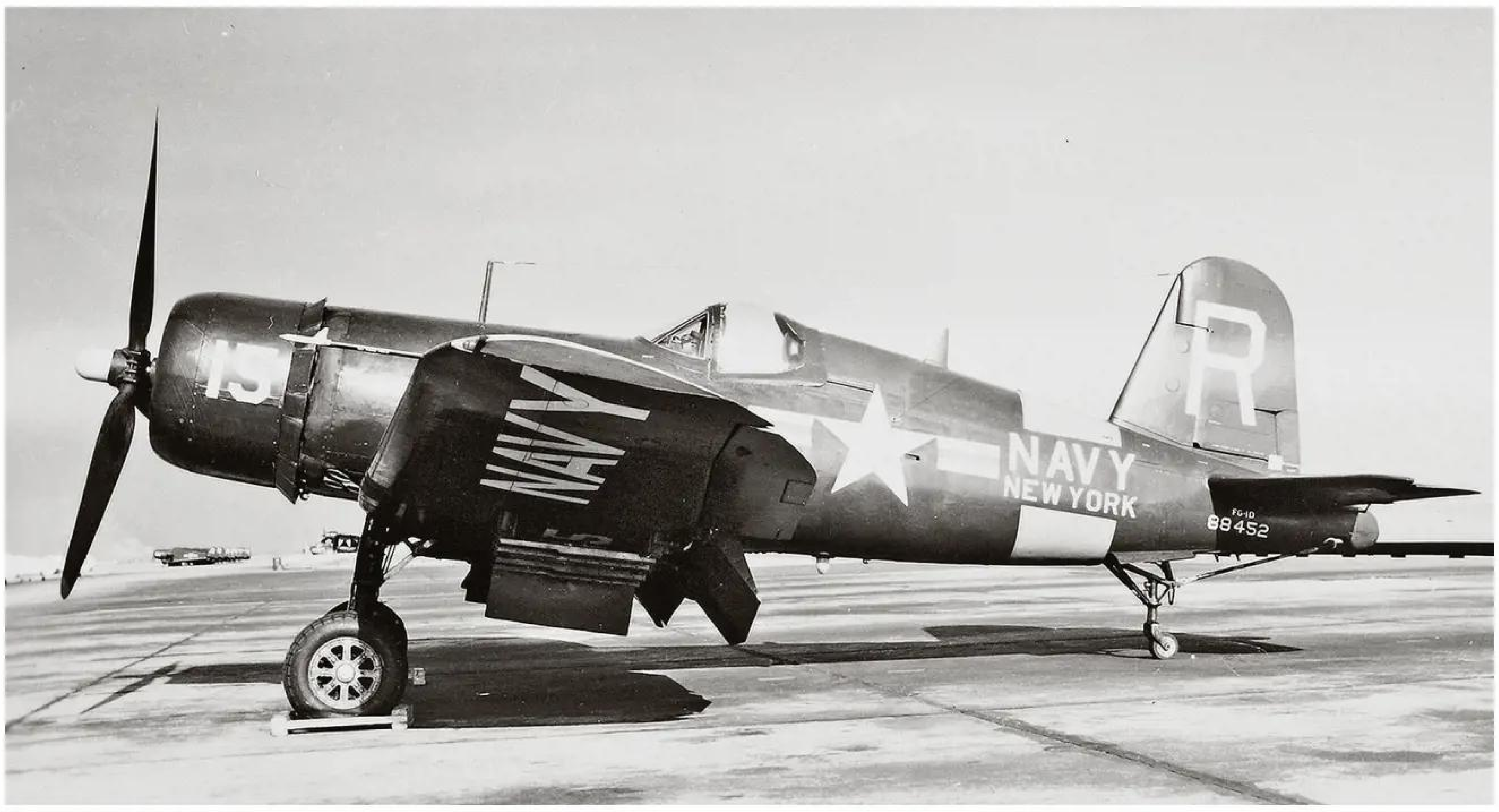
When Jim spotted the Corsair a couple years later, the downhill slide had started. Note the missing propeller. (J. Larsen)



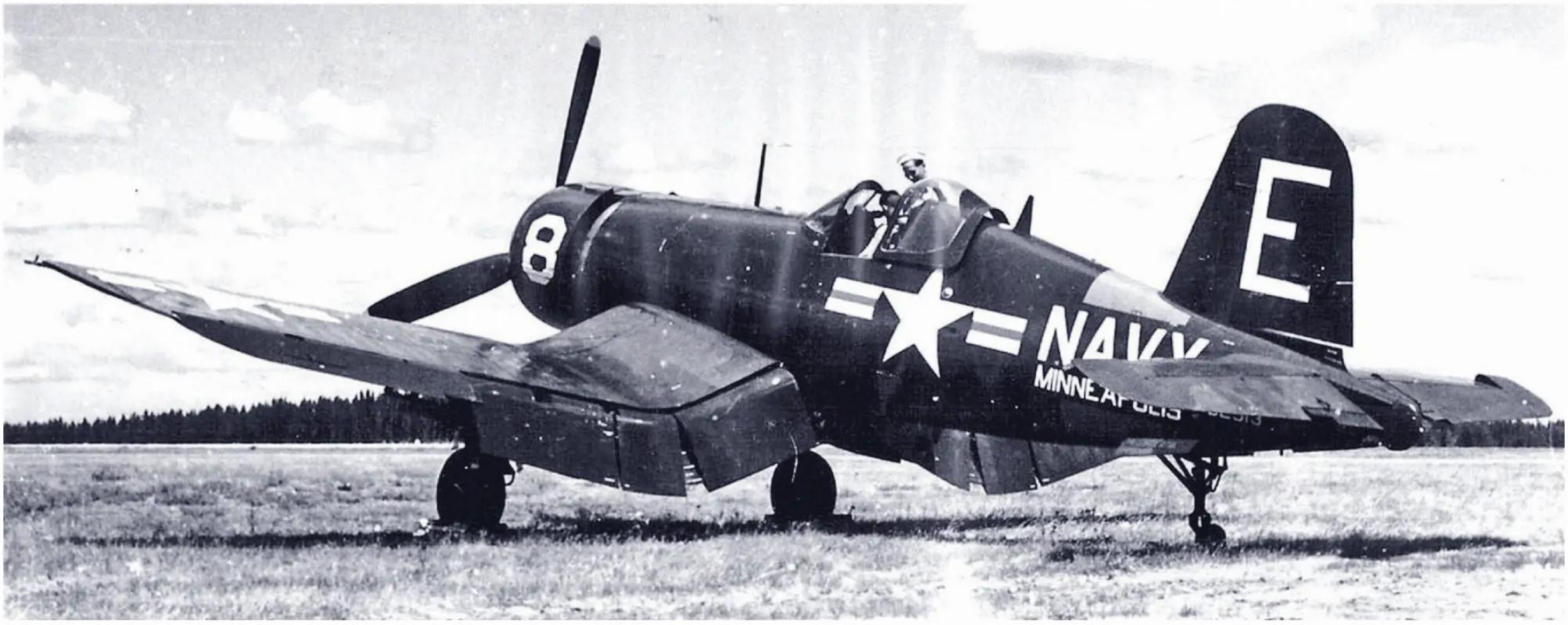
Search through records showed that 92085 had served at NAS Grosse Ile with the reconstituted VMF-251that was now a Reserve unit. As a point of interest, FG-1D BuNo 88385 was *White 7*, the same code as on Lt. Whisenhant's WWII F4U-1D. The aircraft was photographed at Grosse Ile prior to being painted in the first version of Naval Reserve markings.

another NAR unit before winding up in Minneapolis.

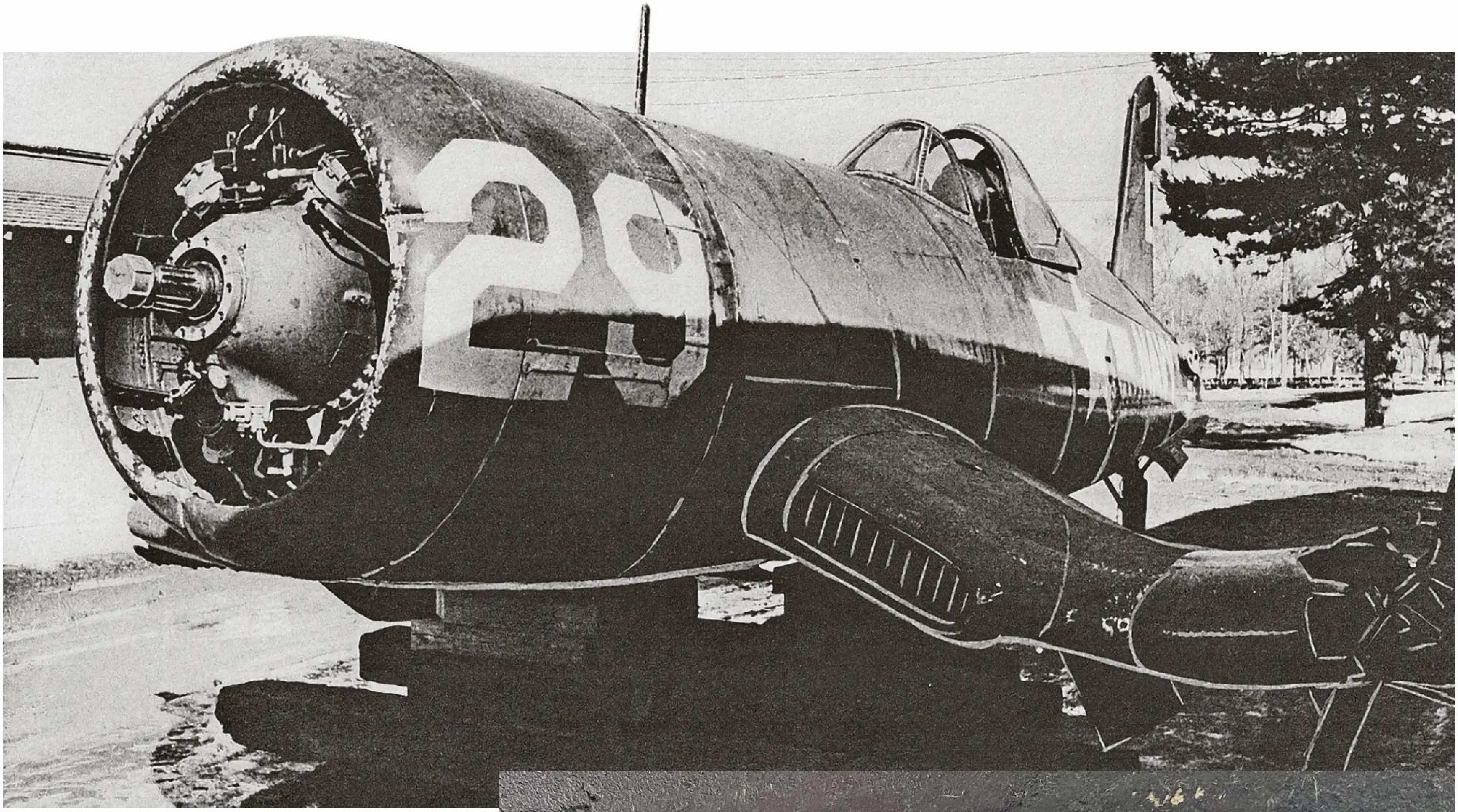
It appears that BuNo 92085 last served with the Reserve unit at Minneapolis and was on its way to NAF Litchfield Park, Arizona, for storage and disposal. Did it have a mechanical problem and land at NAS Denver? The facts are a bit vague but it is fortunate it did not wind up at the Navy's massive Litchfield Park storage facility because it probably would have ended up in a smelter. (EDITOR'S NOTE: It would be nice if a reader has further information on the plane's transfer to Yuma for use on a gunnery range.)



It was common practice to shuffle Corsairs through different Reserve units during the late 1940s and 1950s. Bureau Number 92085 also flew with the Reserve out of NAS New York as did FG-1D BuNo 88452.

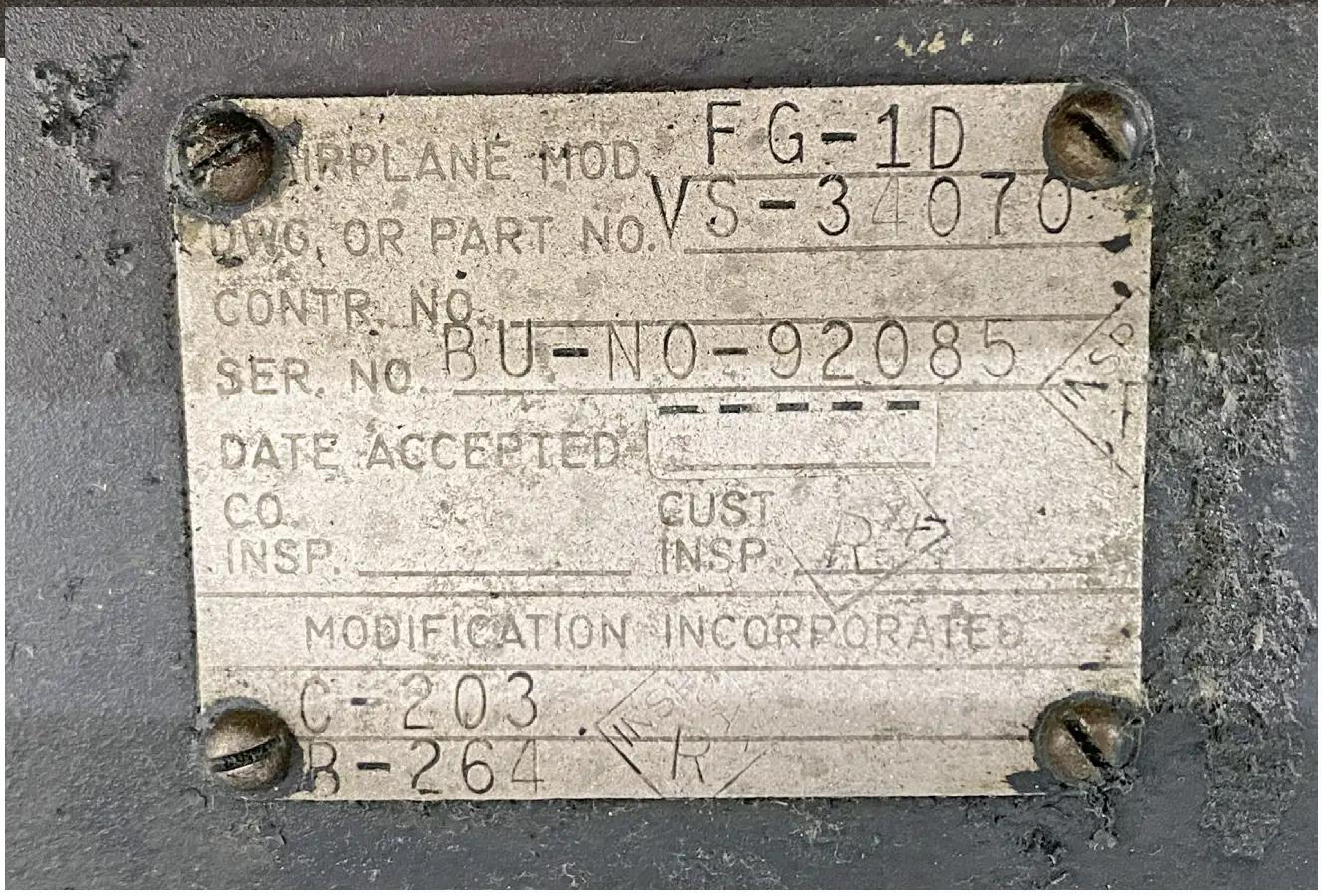


Crew chief straps a pilot into Minneapolis Naval Air Reserve FG-1D BuNo 92513 prior to engine start. It appears that 92085's last operational assignment was with the Reserve at Minneapolis before winding up parked at Denver.

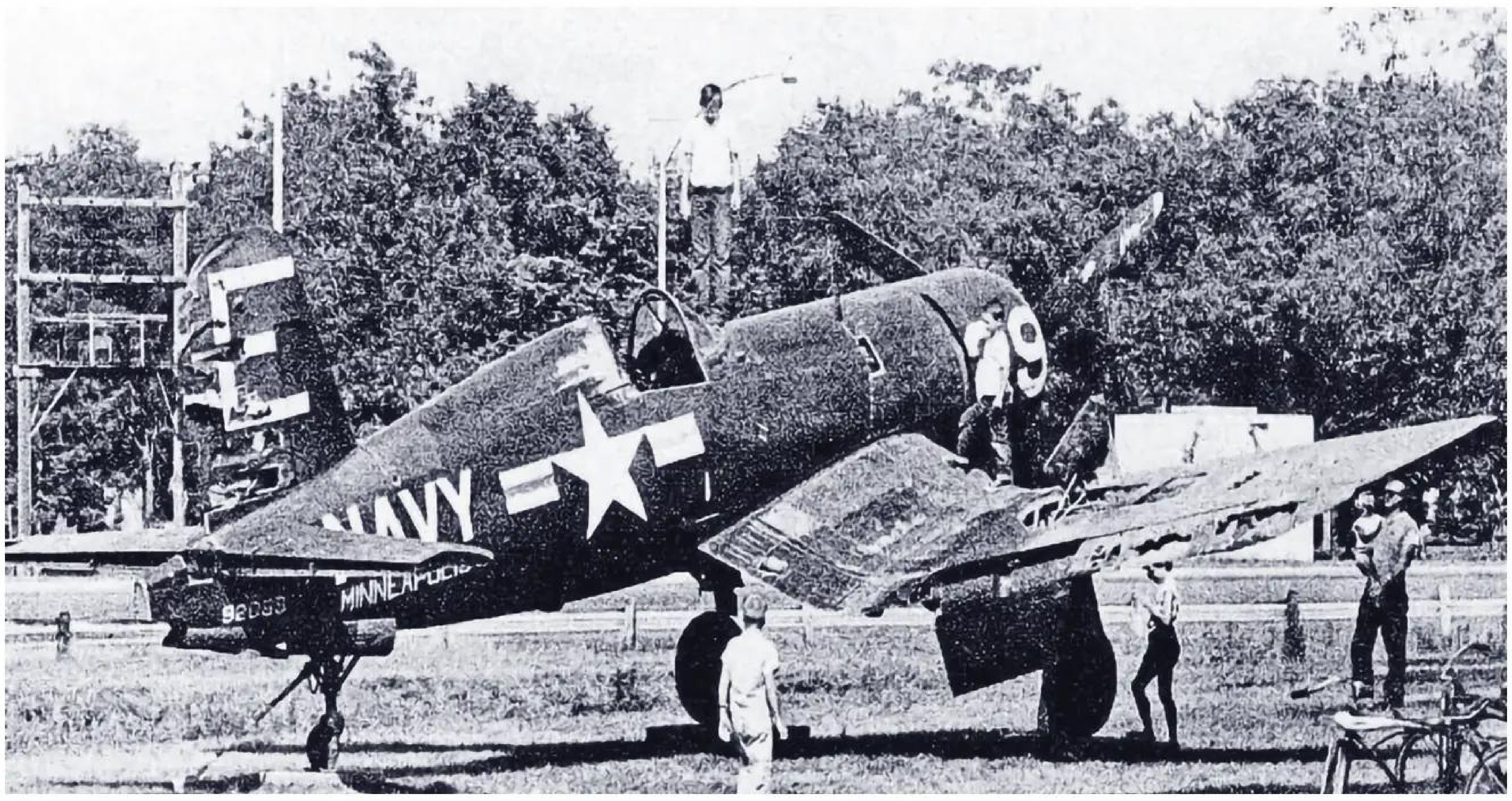


The Corsair arriving during February 1959 to be erected in the park.

Without much fanfare, the FG-1D was put on display at the Antelope Park during February 1959 wearing its Minneapolis NAR markings. Few things are more damaging to a display aircraft than having "squadrons" of kiddies constantly attacking the airframe and the Corsair was open to any and all. First, the weather did a tremendous amount of damage but legions of children ripping, banging, and stomping on the old warrior nearly finished off the legendary aircraft. Plus, parts began to go missing, the cockpit was stripped to bare bones, and on it went. It did get a bit of care when some young people painted the FG-1D a generic blue during 1965, covering all markings in the process.

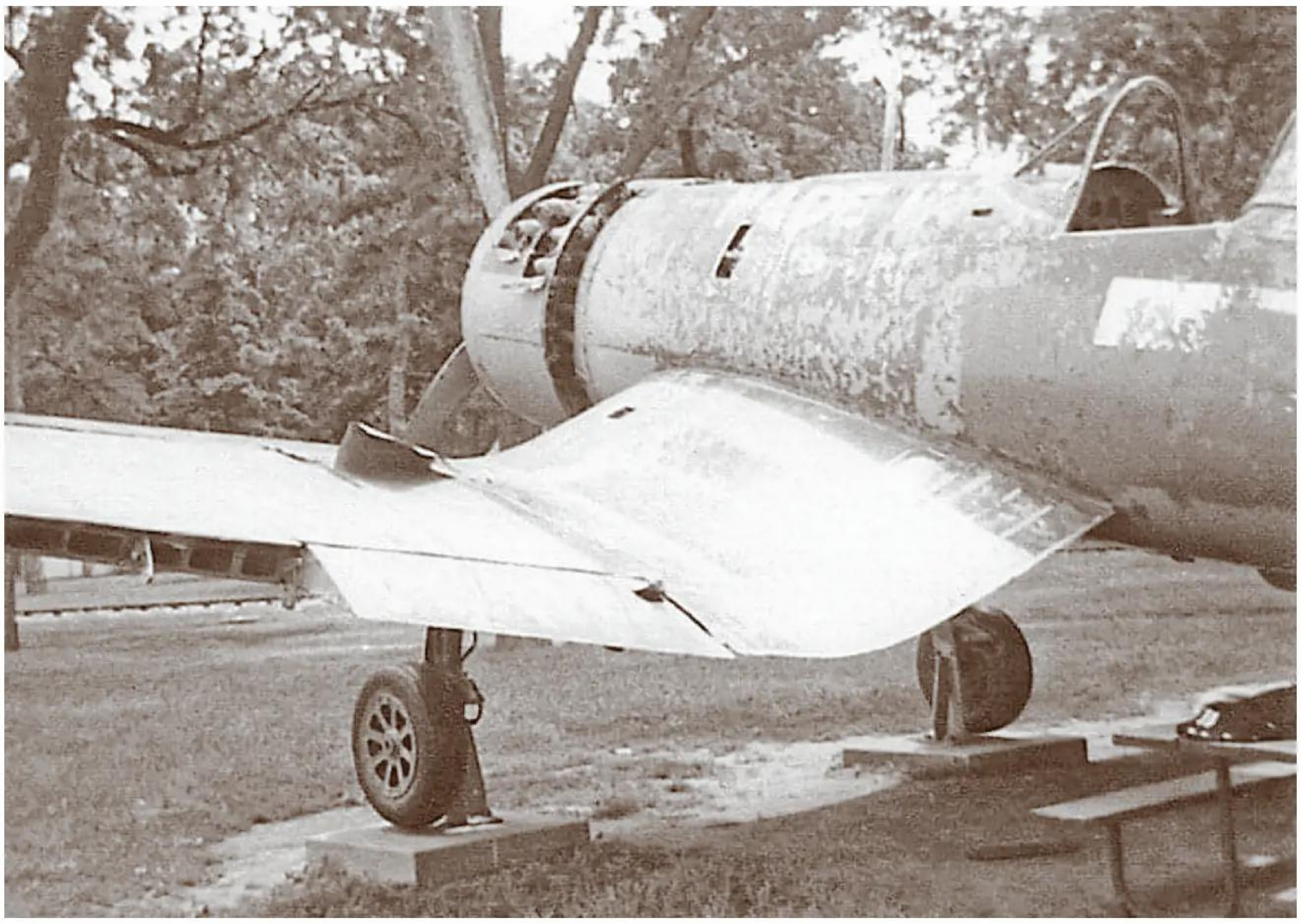


One of the numerous data plates for BuNo 92085 uncovered during the second restoration.

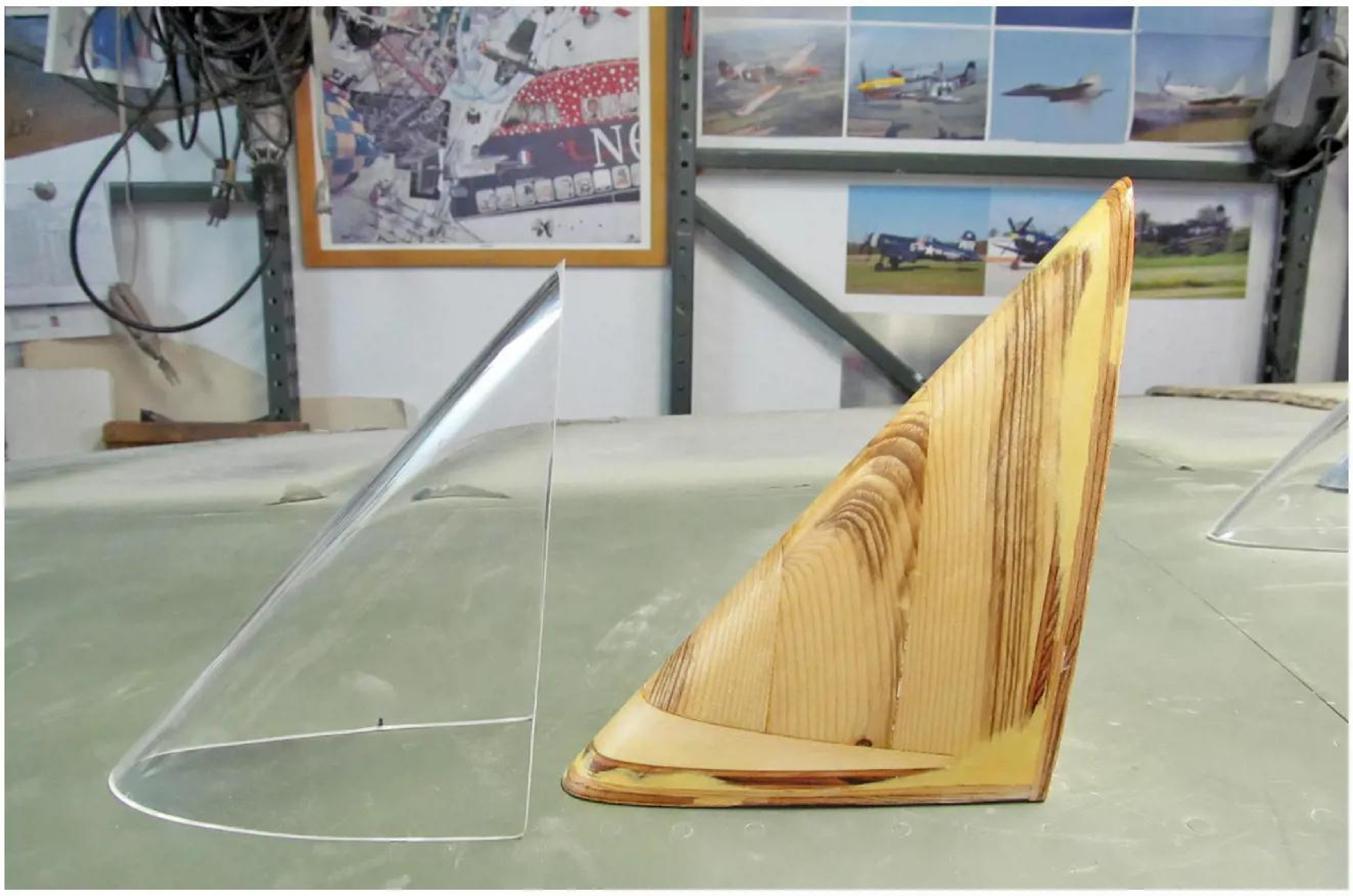


Pieced back together and on display in the park. As can be seen, the condition was already terrible. The elevators are missing while the wood ailerons have been broken apart. Canopy is gone and the fabric on the rudder is shredded. "A group of kids could destroy a Corsair more quickly than a squadron of Zeros," commented one veteran.

We must remember that during this time period, there was little to no interest in preserving our WWII aviation heritage. During June 1968, Nebraska Congressman Robert Denny was contacted by Connecticut Congressman Donald Erwin and it turns out Erwin was in search of a Corsair and had learned of the example in the park. Vought churned out thousands of Corsairs from the factory in Stratford, Connecticut, and Erwin was trying to help the Marine Corps League find an example to put on display as a memorial to



Close-up view showing some of the damage, missing panels, etc.



Mold made to create the plexiglass wingtip flight fixture.

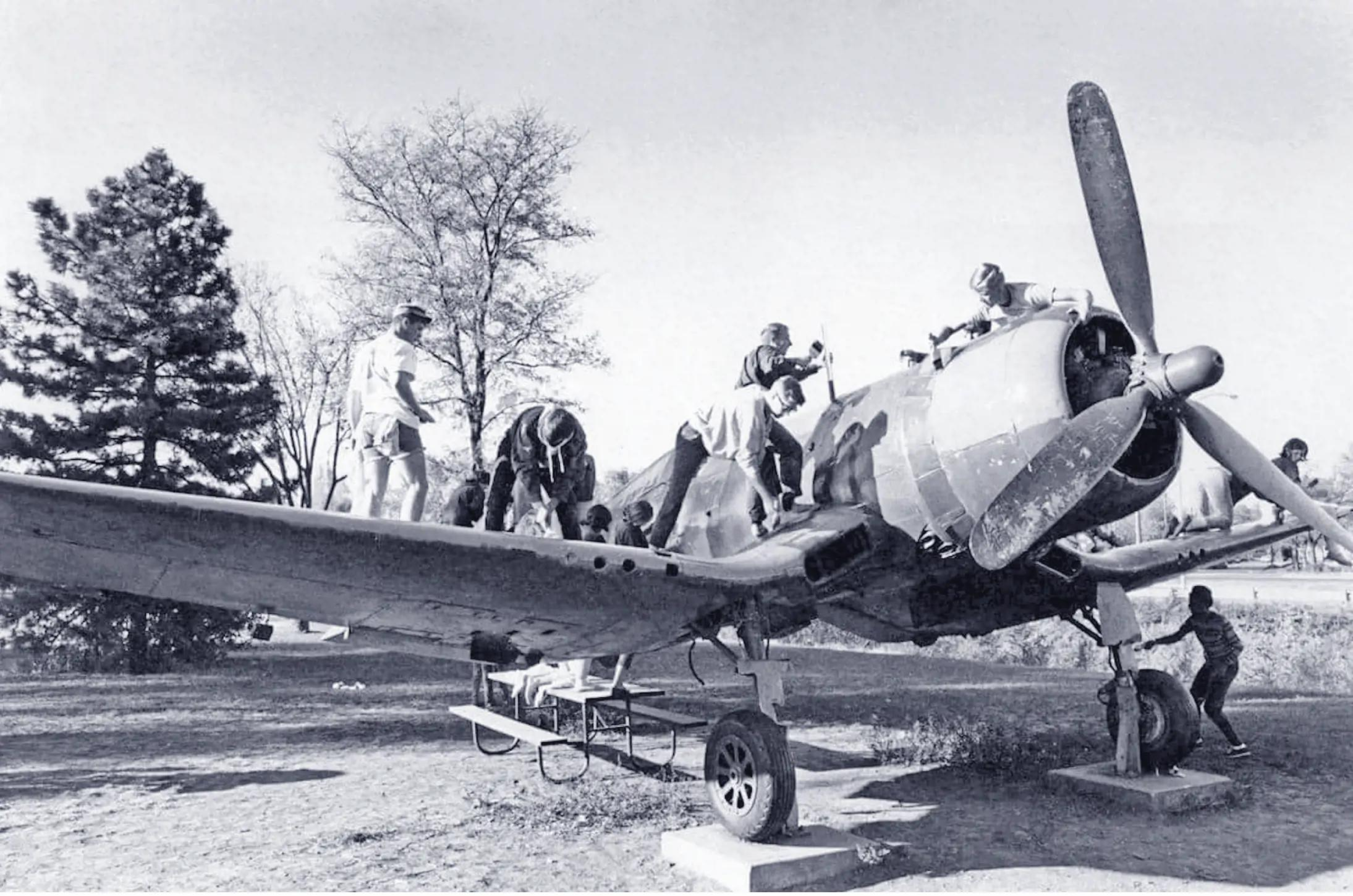
Work underway to complete the restoration of the propeller and hub assembly.

honor the birthplace of the Corsair and all the Marines that had served with the aircraft. Jim Ager was the superintendent for the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department and he was willing to give up the aircraft but with a proviso — he wanted another plane to put on display and at that time the deal fell through.

The 9 June 1970 edition of the Lincoln *Journal Star* reported that the Corsair was going to be traded to the Confederate Air Force at Harlingen, Texas, for a suitable display aircraft. The paper also requested that all the parts stolen over the years be returned! Once again, time has blurred the facts but the deal, for whatever reason, did not go through.

We then have to move up to April 1972 when the Corsair was seen disassembled on a large US Army trailer. Word had it that the fighter was going to be shipped to the Pima County Air and Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona, in trade for a Republic F-84 that would be displayed in the park. Once again, this did not happen and the disassembled FG-1D was then dumped in a vacant lot on North 10th Street in Lincoln where it was further damaged and vandalized. By this point, the Warbird Movement had started and the value of planes like the Corsair slowly began to creep up. However, the Corsair now made another movement. It was loaded onto a truck and disappeared — its exact location not known. The *Journal Star* reported in 1978 that the park finally got a replacement aircraft — Grumman TF-9J Cougar BuNo 146417 but locals do not recall ever seeing the Cougar put on display. (For those readers that are "completists" when it comes to historic facts and figures, it should be noted that this Cougar is now on display at the Evergreen Air and Space Museum in McMinnville, Oregon, where it is painted in Blue Angels colors and markings.)

Now, where was the Corsair during this time period? In 1976, one source notes that the FG-1D was found by Brig. Gen. Robert Raisch at the Yuma gunnery range. The historical importance of the Corsair



A group of young people volunteered to paint the FG-1D. Seen with paint brushes in hand, a coat of generic blue was applied to the airframe.

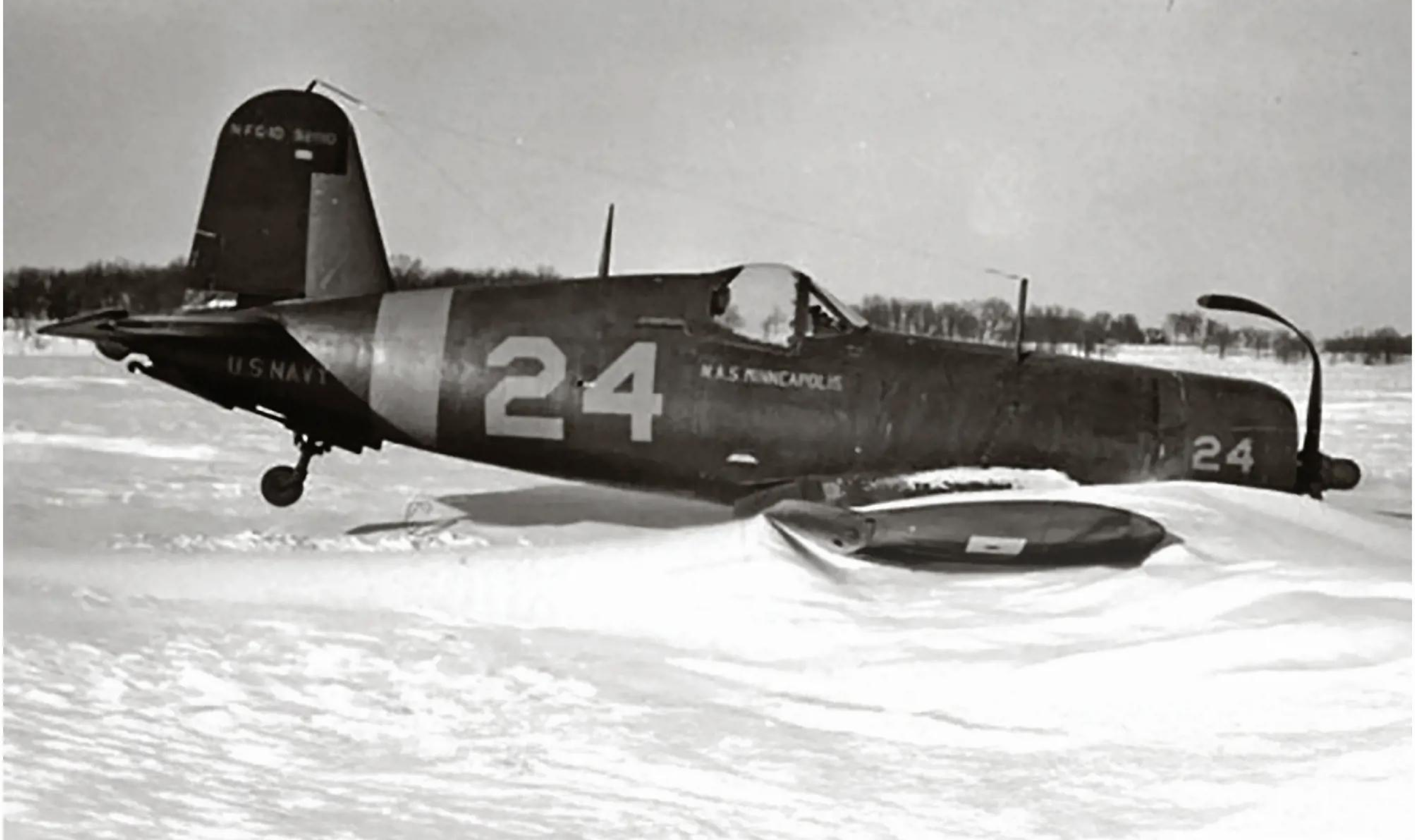
was now known and it seems odd that it would be on a gunnery range. The facts are completely missing from this portion of the aircraft's history because the plane was also noted as being at Mojave Airport with several other Corsair airframes acquired by Wally McDonnell where at least one was being restored for the Marine Corps Aviation Museum at Quantico. It appears that Gen. Raisch did enter into some sort of agreement with the Marines and with the help of the late Dan Sabovitch, manager of Mojave Airport, the now very battered airframe was loaded onto yet another truck and driven to Detroit, Michigan.

The Corsair was transferred to the SMAM on 30 September 1981 and a first restoration was completed by personnel from the Naval Air Facility at Selfridge ANG Base in mid-1984, the Corsair thereafter going on outdoor display in the SMAM Air Park. When acquired, the plane was in very poor condition with many missing pieces but the men and women did the best they could with what they had. However, three

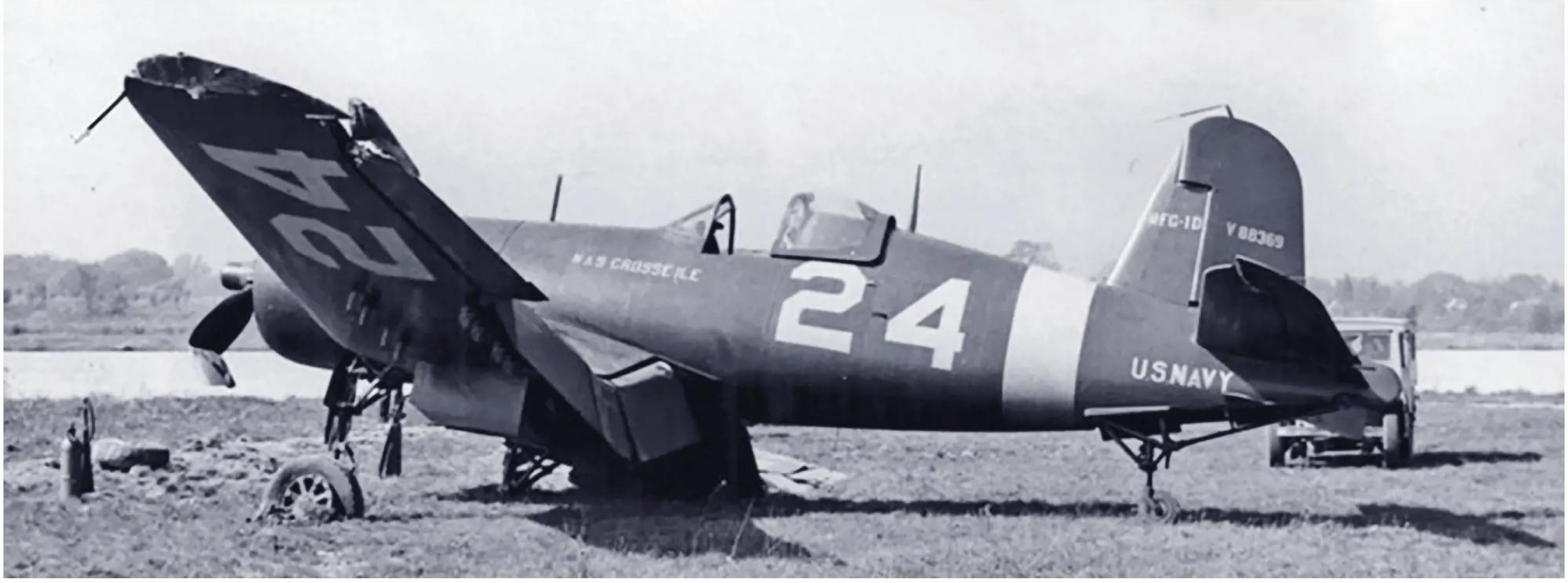
A coat of new paint did not stop the Corsair from a constant battering from children.

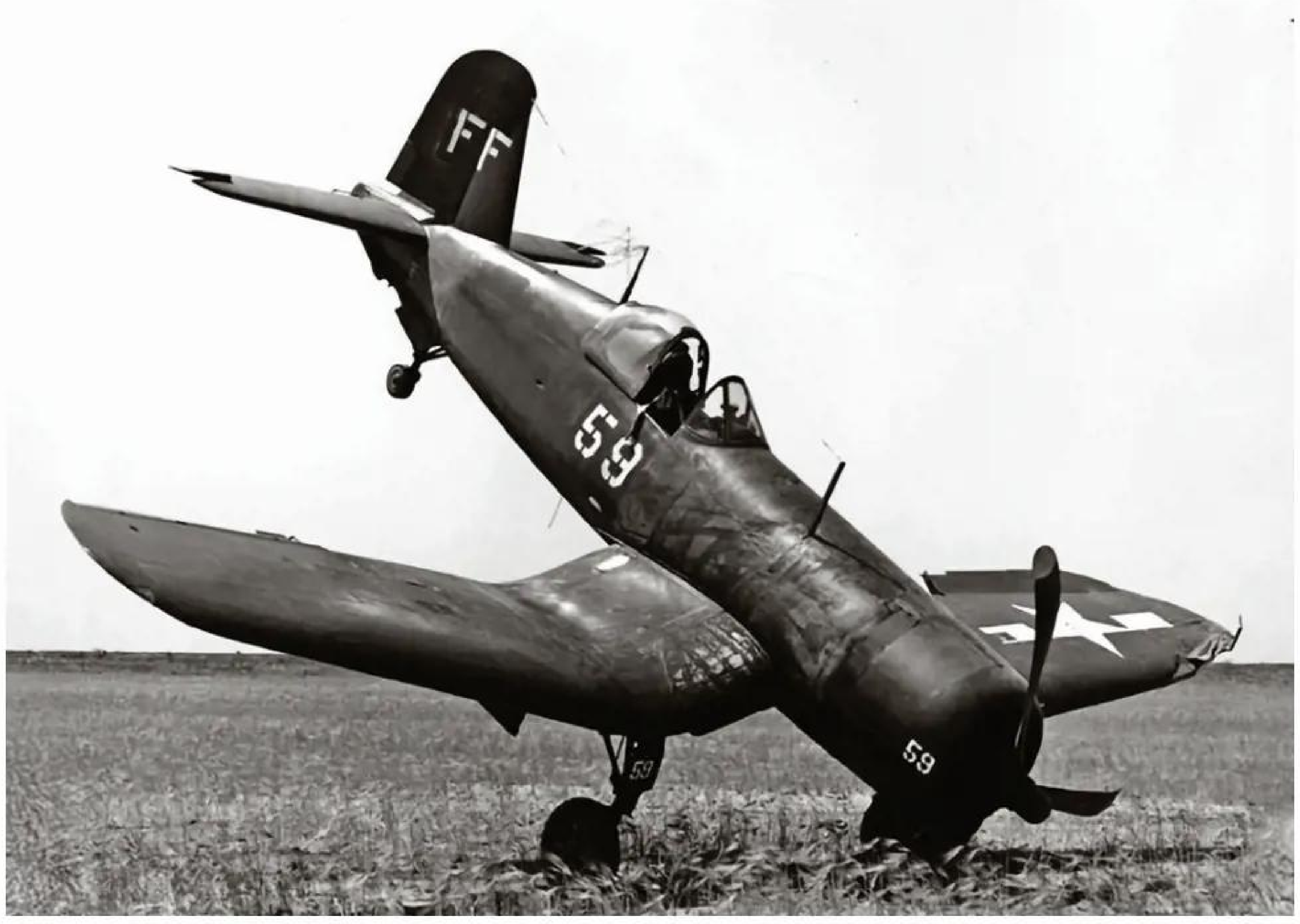
CORSAIRS IN THE RESERVES

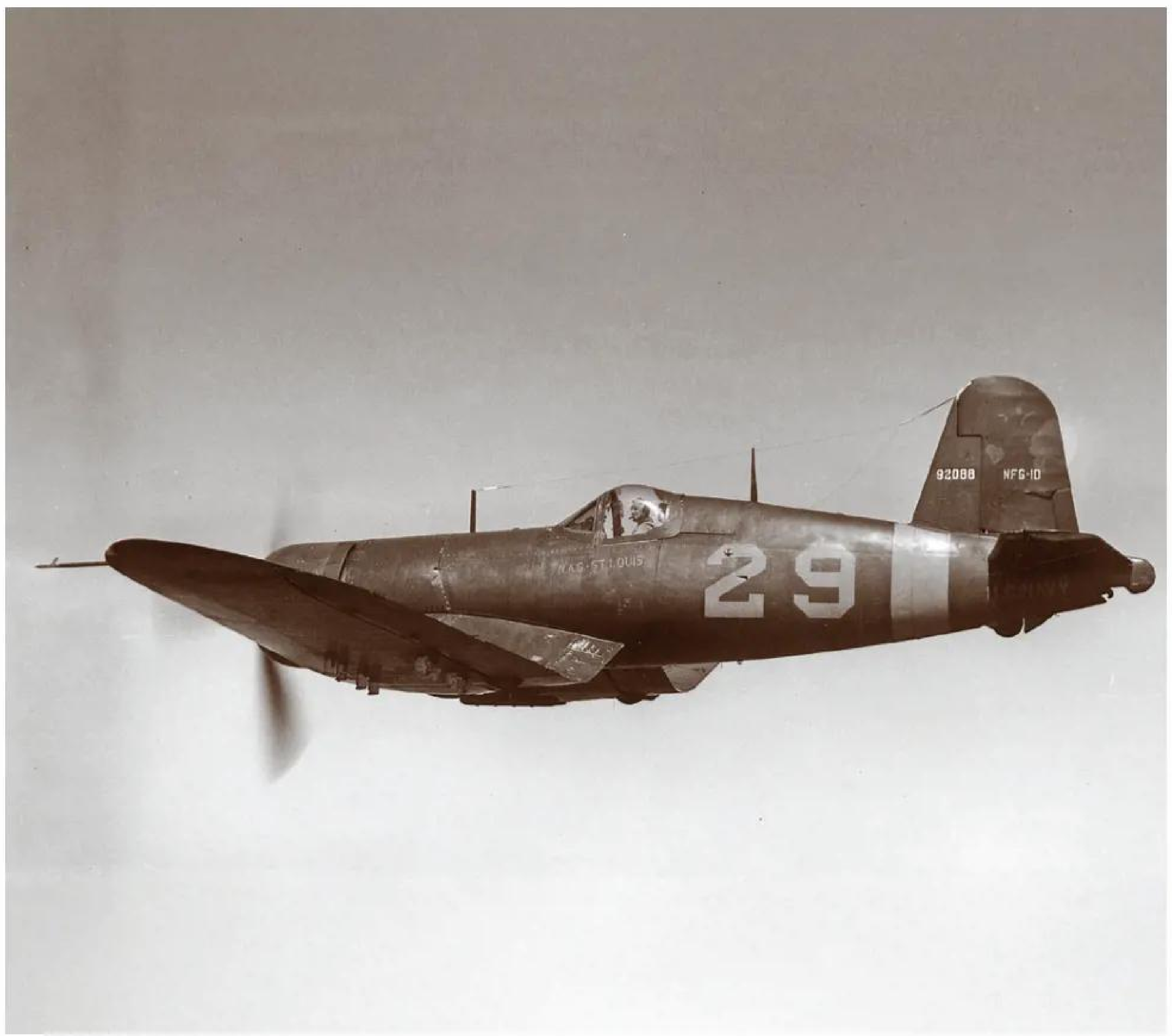
AS OUR SUBJECT FG-1D SERVED WITH SEVERAL NAVAL RESERVE UNITS, WE PRESENT A SELECTION OF CORSAIRS IN DIFFERENT RESERVE MARKINGS

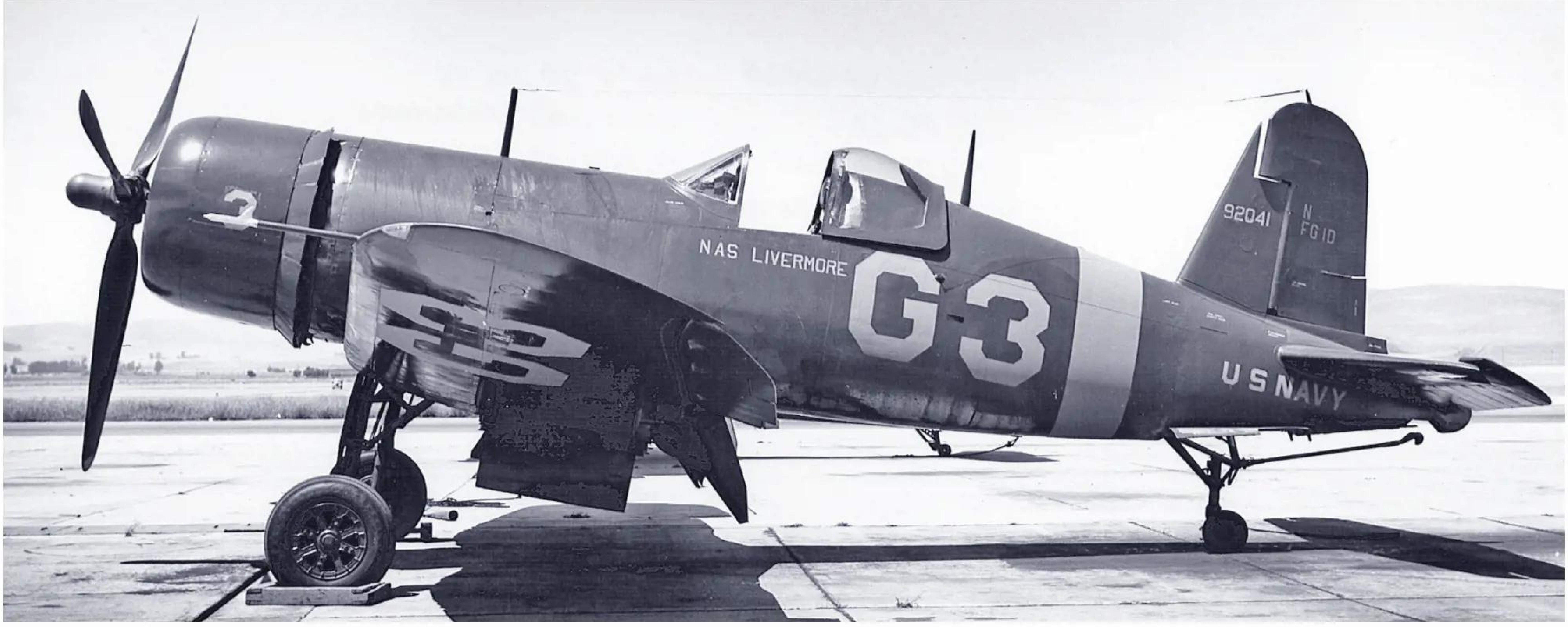


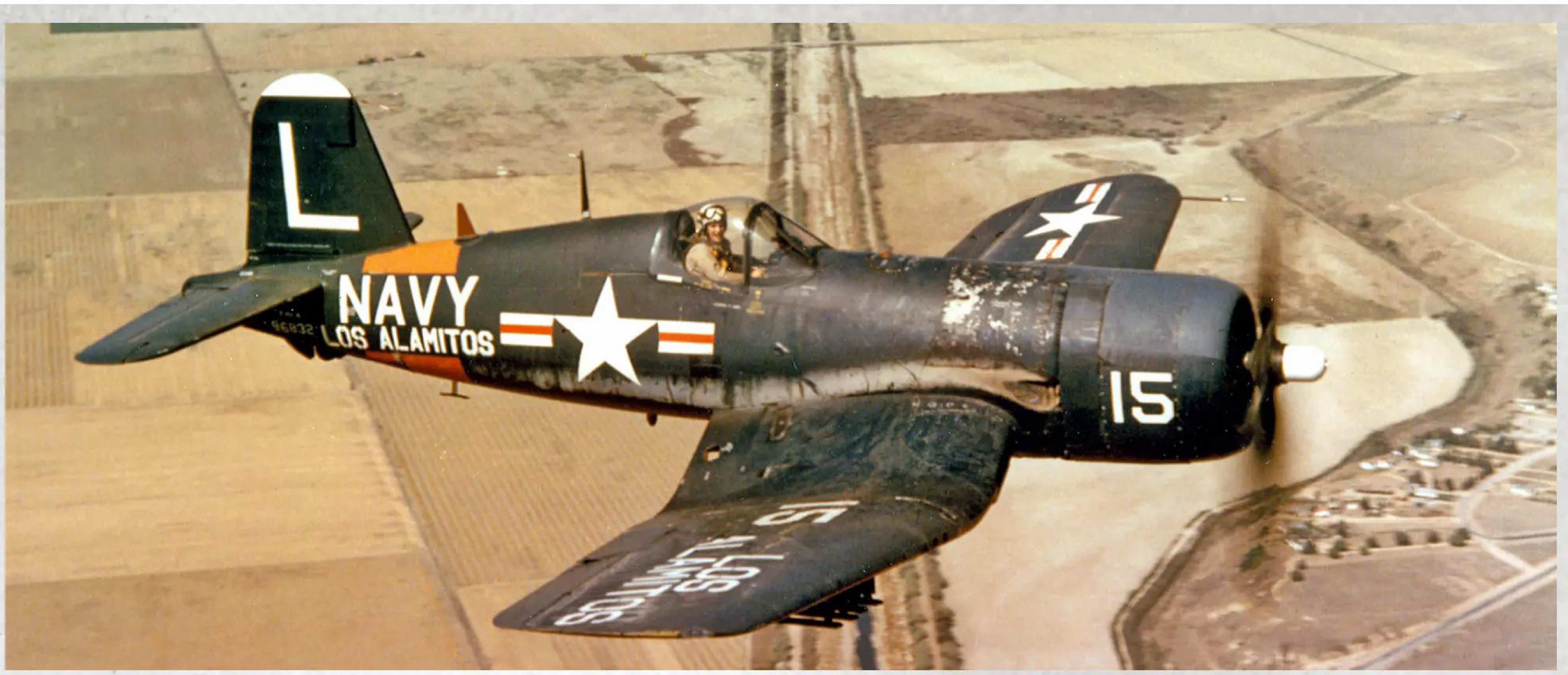
With the end of WWII, the US Navy had thousands of surplus aircraft as well as aviators that still wished to fly. With massive military cutbacks it was realized that this nation still needed a US Navy with a strong Reserve presence. The establishment of the Naval Air Reserve dates back to 29 August 1916 when the Naval Appropriations Act for fiscal year 1917 provided funding for the establishment of a naval flying corps along with the purchase of a dozen aircraft. From that point, the Reserves would grow and grow albeit with many changes and modifications. With the end of WWII, the Reserves were restructured and had many aircraft types from which to draw from including Corsairs, Helldivers, Privateers, Catalinas, and Hellcats. The Navy wanted a new color scheme to distinguish Reserve planes from regular USN aircraft plus they also wanted a way to identify pilots and aircraft that might be "showing off" over their hometowns. When it came to Corsairs, the aircraft were painted overall Glossy Sea Blue with Non-Specular Sea Blue anti-glare panels and Orange-Yellow markings. According to the original specification, they were to have 30-inch fuselage numbers and 40-inch wing numbers. Oddly, all national insignia were deleted from the fuselage. Each air section was to number its aircraft sequentially in blocks — lowest numbers would be assigned to fighter, middle range to trainers, and highest range to transport/utility aircraft. Also, the Reserve station name was to appear below the cockpit while special assignments (instrument, staff, navigation, radio, or administration) were to be painted below the station name. Goodyear FG-1D BuNo 92010 from NAS Minneapolis (as painted under the canopy) was photographed after a belly-landing caused by engine problems near Emmetsburg, Iowa, during 1947. The Corsair displays these earliest style of immediate post-war Naval Air Reserve markings.


Corsair from NAS Grosse Isle following a ground-loop on 3 October 1946. At this point, Reserve Corsairs had an "N" added before the aircraft designation and NFG-1D can be seen painted on the vertical fin while the Bureau Numbers had a "V" added and V-88369 is painted on the rudder — all in Orange-Yellow.

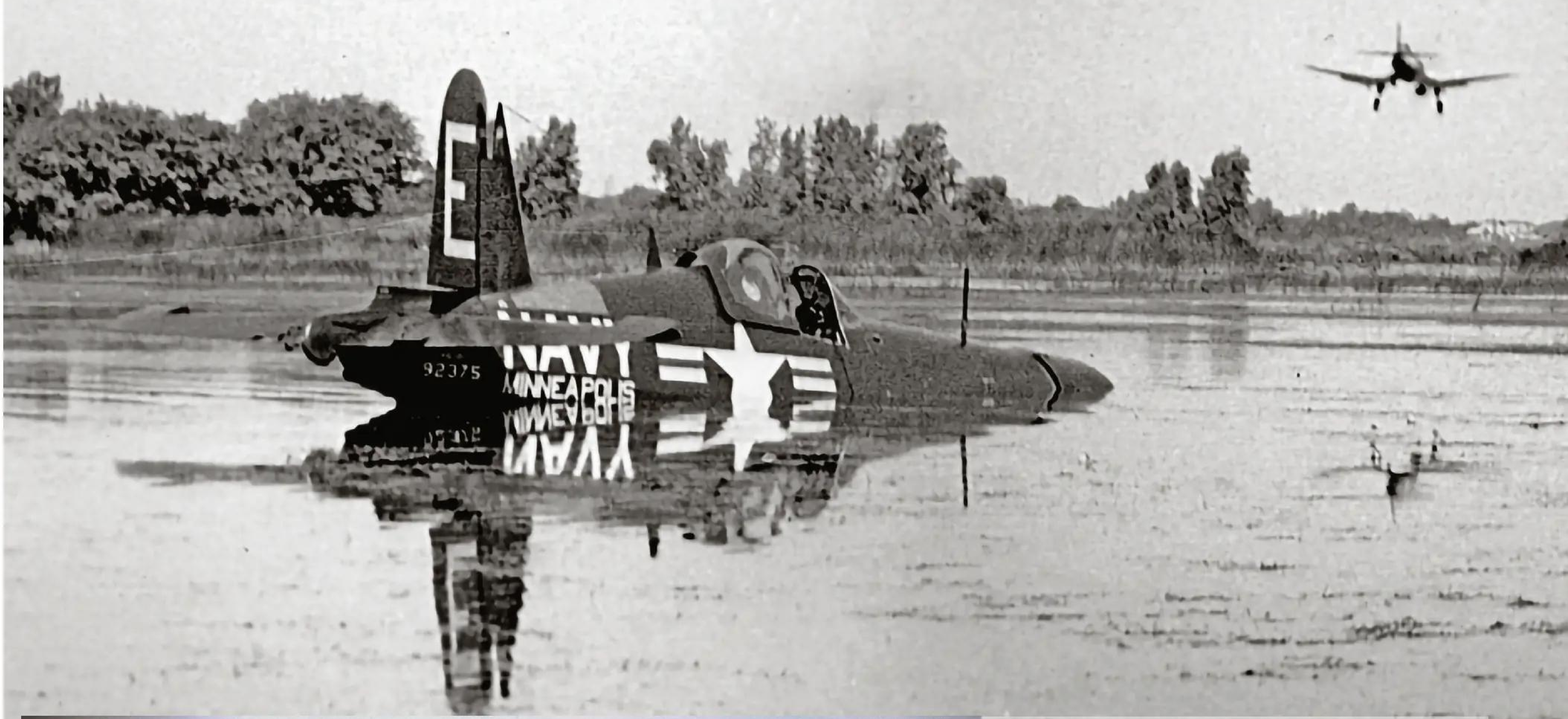

N-FG-1D BuNo 92225 after going off the runway at its home base of NAS Oakland on 23 June 1947. The aircraft carries a combination of original Reserve markings along with some of the newer modifications to those markings. The fuselage does not yet have the national insignia added but the Orange-Yellow fuselage band has been oversprayed with International Orange. The Bureau Number and "Navy" have been painted beneath the horizontal stabilizer. On the vertical, "F" stood for Oakland while the second "F" was for fighter (Oakland originally had the G code as an identifier).

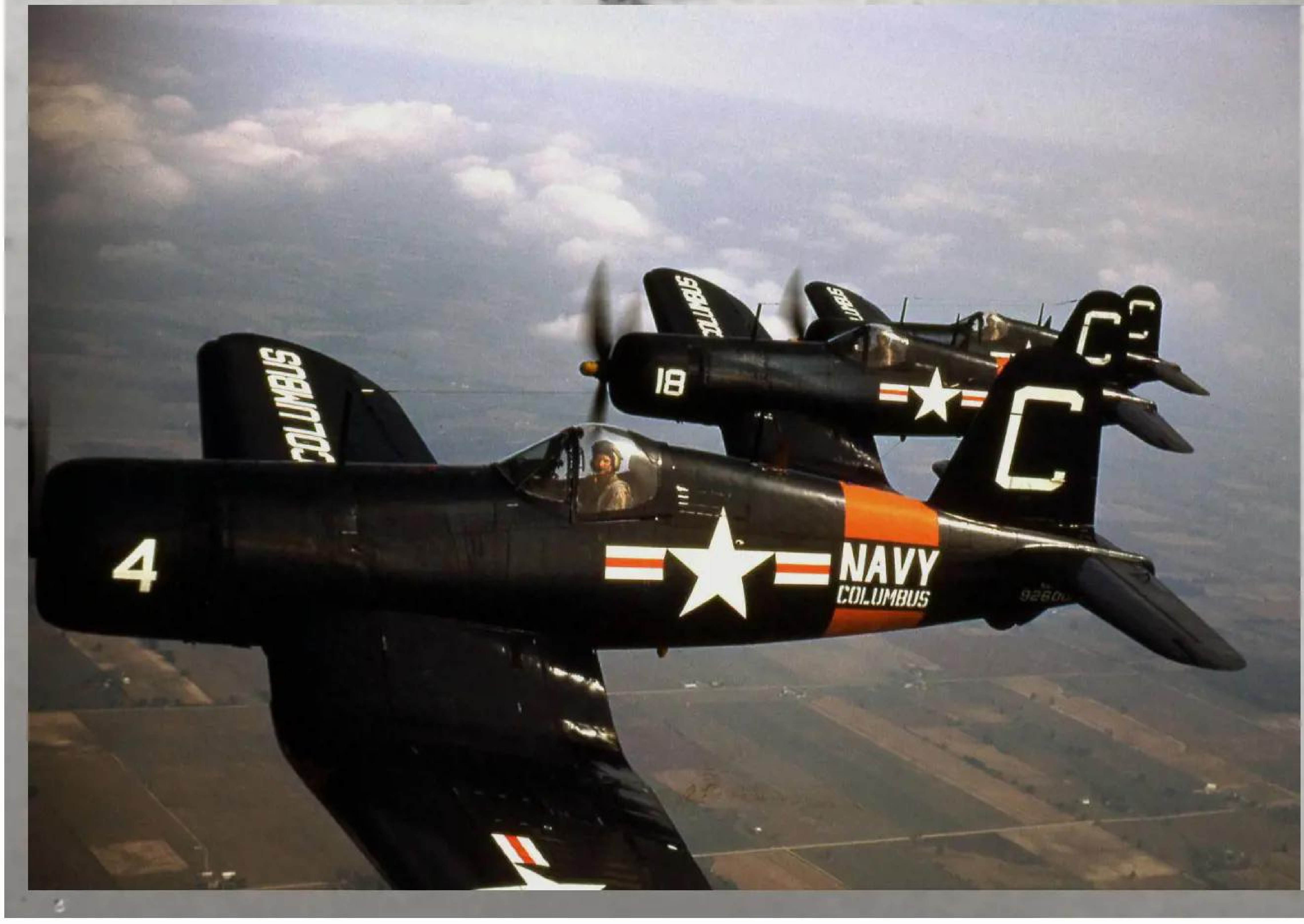

Fine in-flight study of NFG-1D BuNo 92088 (applications of these markings were inconsistent since there is not a hyphen between the FG nor a V in-front of the Bureau Number). Otherwise, this St. Louis NAR aircraft is in the standard markings with Orange-Yellow paint.


Corsair from NAS Lemoore with non-standard markings including the "G3" code with a larger than normal "U S NAVY" painted below the horizontal stabilizer. Bureau Number 92041 also has an odd application of NFG-1D with the N painted above the F. Even though detailed specifications were issued for the painting of Reserve Corsairs, there were many variations.

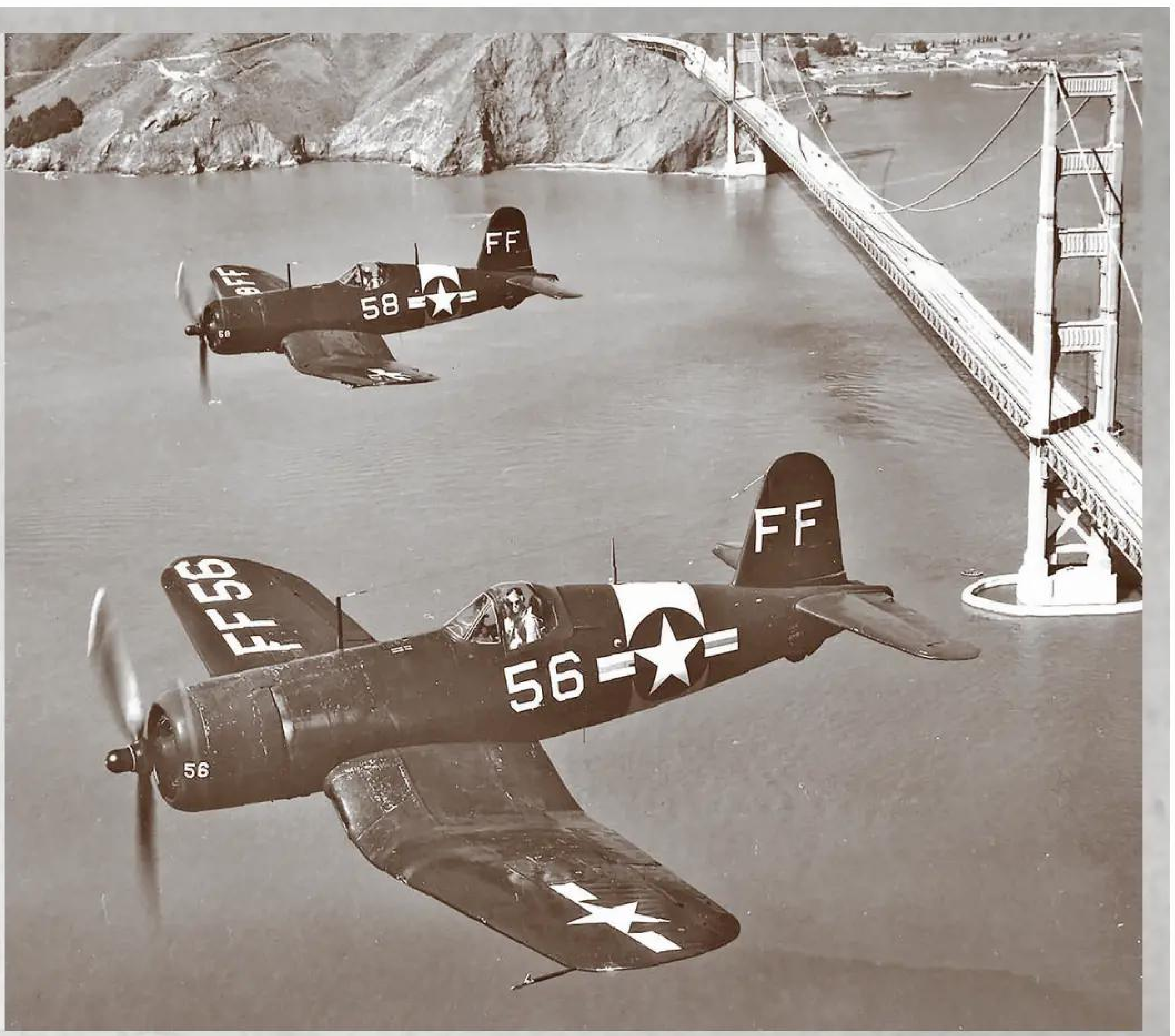

L
NAVY
LOS ALAMITOS
15

Well-worn Vought F4U-4 assigned to NAR Los Alamitos shows how the revised Reserve markings now had the national insignia painted on the fuselage. The code letter for Los Alamitos was L.


E
92375
NAVY
MINNEAPOLIS

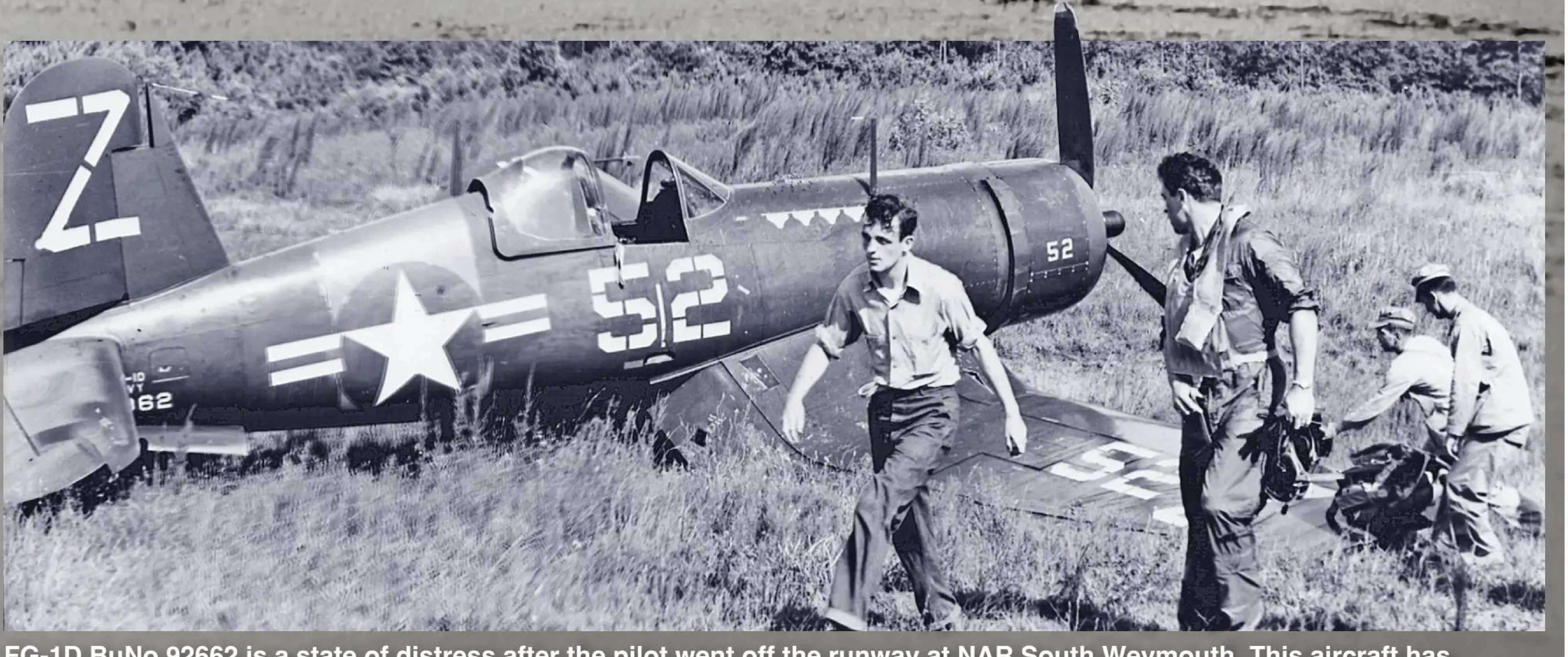

COLUMBUS
4
C
NAVY
COLUMBUS
18

Trio of freshly-painted FG-1Ds from NAR Columbus pull in tight with the camera plane. Bureau Number 92600 is in the lead and it displays the bright International Orange fuselage recognition band along with the station name above the right wing, replacing the codes previously used.

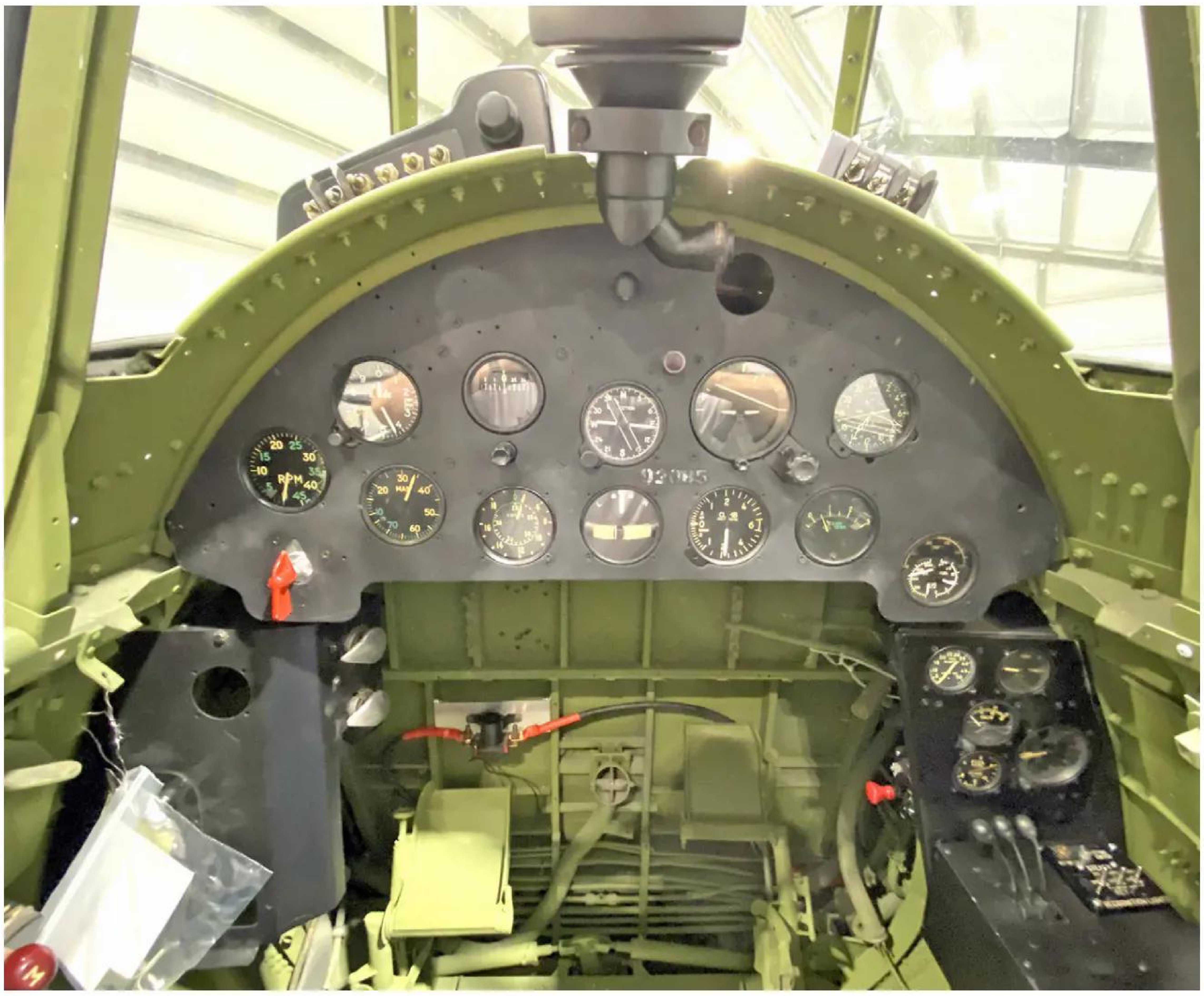


Classic William T. Larkins photograph of two NAR Oakland FG-1Ds overflying the Golden Gate Bridge and heading out to sea. Although it is difficult to tell because the photo is black and white, tonal values indicate that the fuselage bands may still be Orange-Yellow rather than International Orange.

While another Goodyear FG-1D Corsair heads for a safe landing at NAS Minneapolis, the pilot of FG-1D BuNo 92375 probably was wondering what went wrong to cause his plane to make a “water landing” near the airfield. At this point, the earlier Reserve markings had been replaced and the fuselage band was now International Orange with the rest of the lettering in Insignia White.

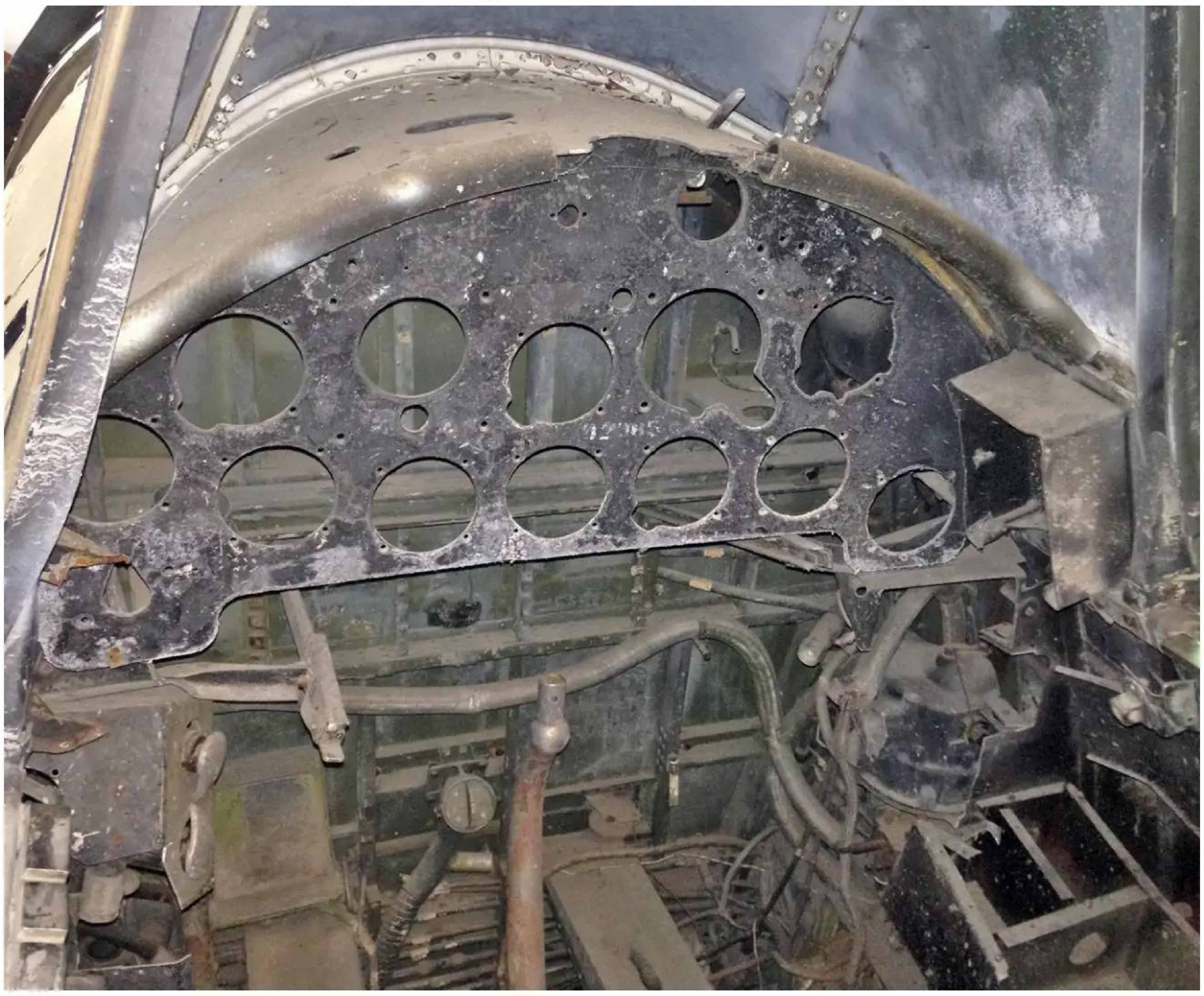


FG-1D BuNo 92662 is a state of distress after the pilot went off the runway at NAR South Weymouth. This aircraft has a mixture of old and new Reserve markings with coding “Z52” on the right wing rather than the station name. Also, the fuselage identification band is in a non-standard position and may still be Orange-Yellow while the national insignia has been added over it. The purpose of the markings ahead of the windscreen are not known.


The cockpit had been completely gutted and a huge amount of work was required to bring the area back to display condition.

decades of Michigan weather took a very heavy toll on this classic fighter and in November 2014 it became obvious that this aircraft was going to require some major restorative work if it was going to survive. This led to a second static/non-flyable restoration that was begun by museum volunteers.

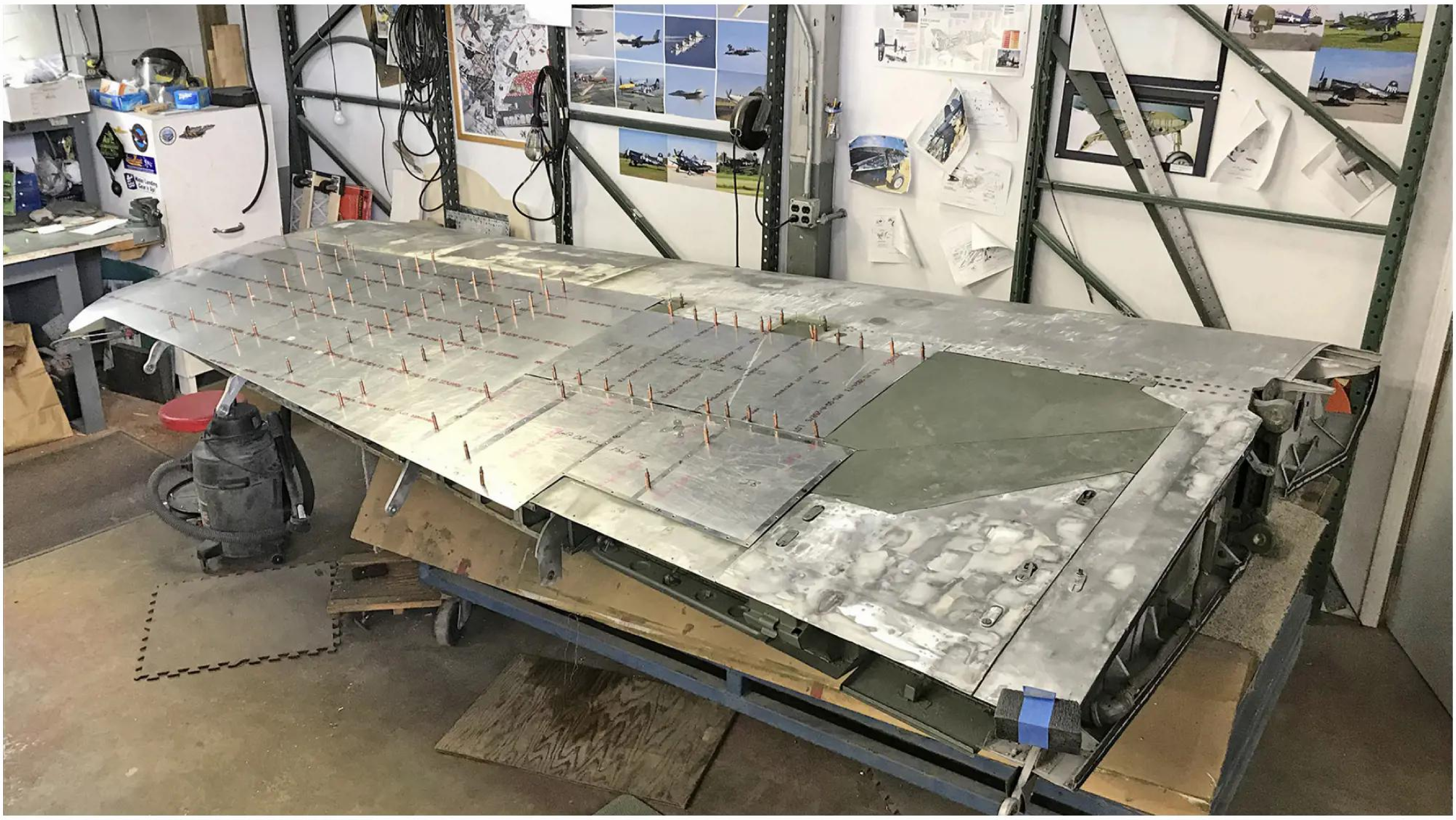
Removal of the outboard wings in the Air Park was a lengthy task due to severe corrosion on the wing pins, so the wing flaps and tail control surfaces were removed and their restoration began. In early 2015, the outboard wings were finally removed and media blasting to remove the paint from all airframe surfaces began. This step revealed quite a bit of body filler and fiberglass patching of nearly 200 bullet holes from its days on the gunnery range at Yuma (again, it would be extremely helpful if a reader has further information/photos of the plane being used as a target).


This was the condition of the instrument panel when the team began the second restoration.

Internal damage and corrosion were found and on virtually every portion of the flying surfaces, fuselage, and landing gear. All this had to be addressed. New aluminum skins were made for the outboard wings and tail control surfaces. The body filler and fiberglass patches over the bullet holes were removed and the aluminum skin was repaired following standard Navy procedures. Many missing airframe components including ailerons, tailgear doors, wing and tail tips, elevator and rudder tabs, and panel stiffeners were built. Three replica Browning M-2 .50-caliber machine guns and ammunition troughs were built and installed in the refurbished right wing gun bay.

The Pratt & Whitney R-2800 radial engine was found to have internal corrosion inside several cylinders due to missing rocker covers that exposed the interior of the powerplant to the elements. The engine was stripped down to its crankshaft and rods. Cylinder assemblies and corroded internal parts were cleaned and preserved. The engine cases were media blasted, painted and reassembled. Missing external engine parts were replaced by new old stock purchased from vendors. Damaged engine accessory components were repaired and many missing air duct parts were made. The many engine air cooling baffles plus intake and exhaust pipes were stripped and repainted.

Much work went into the cockpit area. The entire cockpit was in a stripped and vandalized condition. The instrument panel was repaired and painted. All of the instruments were missing, so replacements donated by a museum member were installed. A new pilot's electrical console, rudder trough and rudder pedals were built. Some of the missing components such as the pilot's seat were fabricated and many small components were 3D printed. A new canopy bubble was built and donated by a local supporter using the original

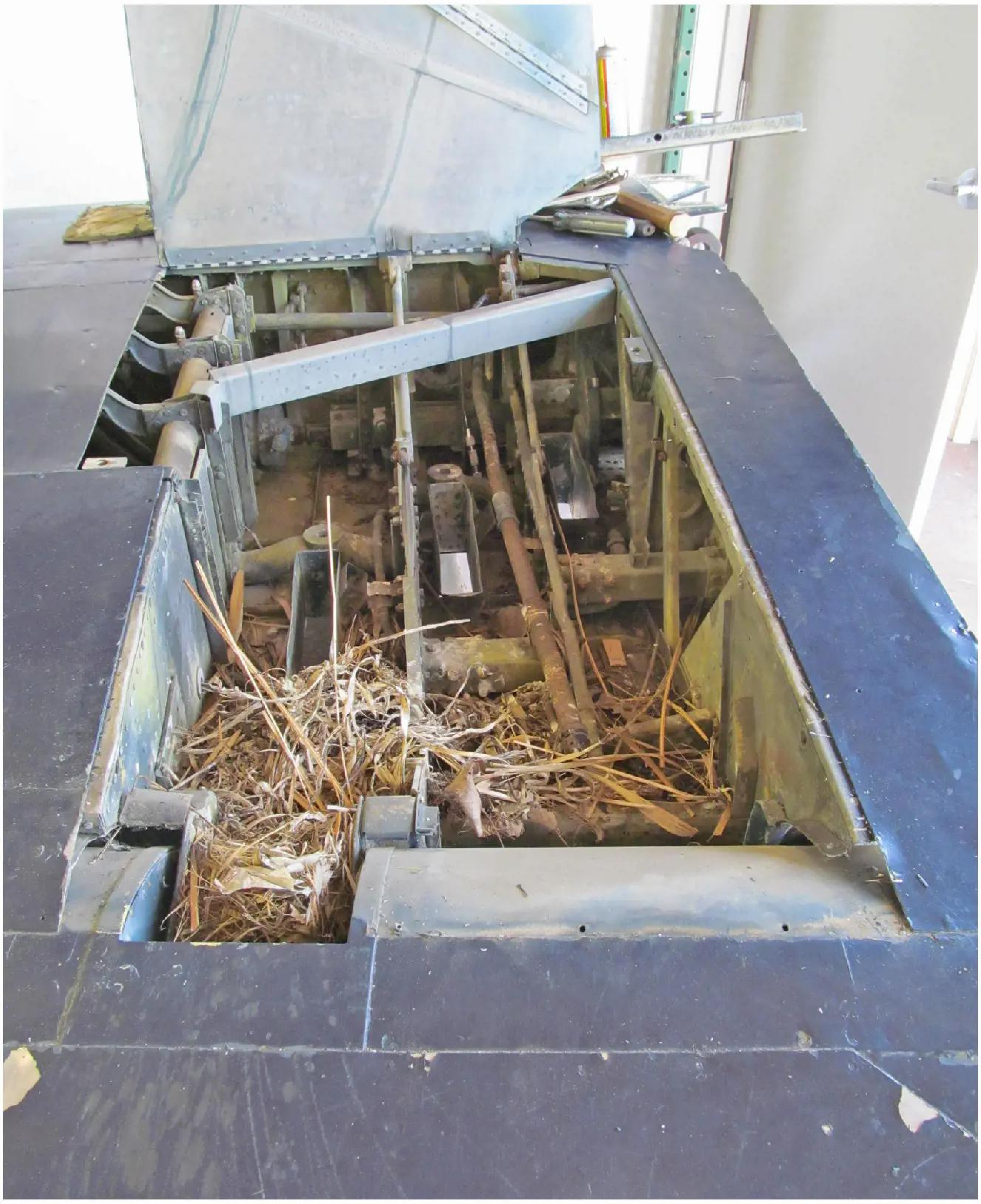


Repairing an outer wing panel.

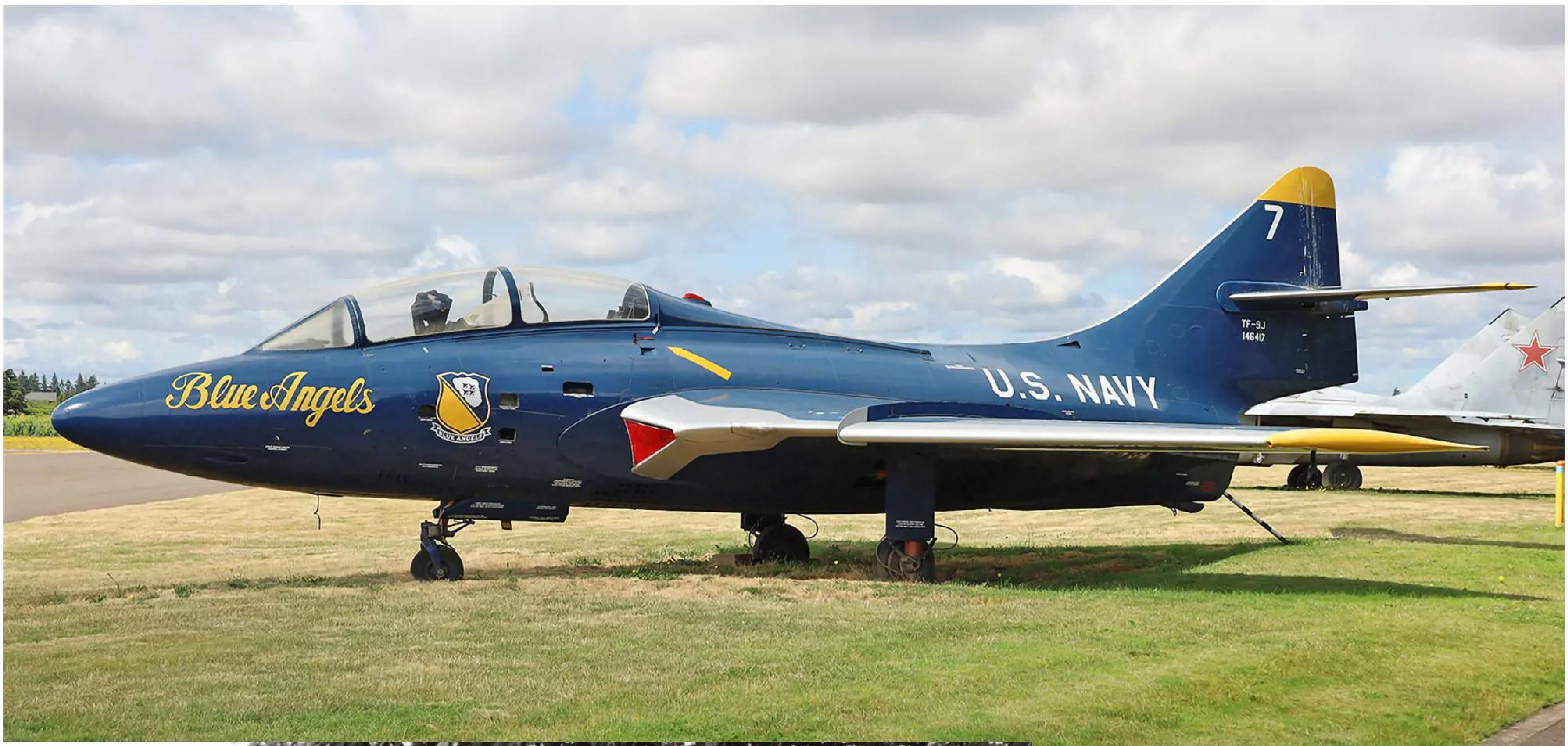
crazed and cracked canopy as a pattern. (EDITOR'S NOTE: It should be noted that anything to do with a Corsair has become not only difficult to find but also very, very expensive to acquire.)

The museum wanted to present the Corsair in a paint scheme and markings representative of its Marine Corps heritage and to recognize the contributions of southeast Michigan in WWII. No Corsairs were ever assigned to Selfridge, but VMF-251, a USMC Reserve Squadron, was based at NAS Grosse Ile near Selfridge from 1946 through 1950. It was decided that the Corsair would be given the markings of a VMF-251 FG-1D as flown by Lt. Whisenhant over the Philippines in 1945.

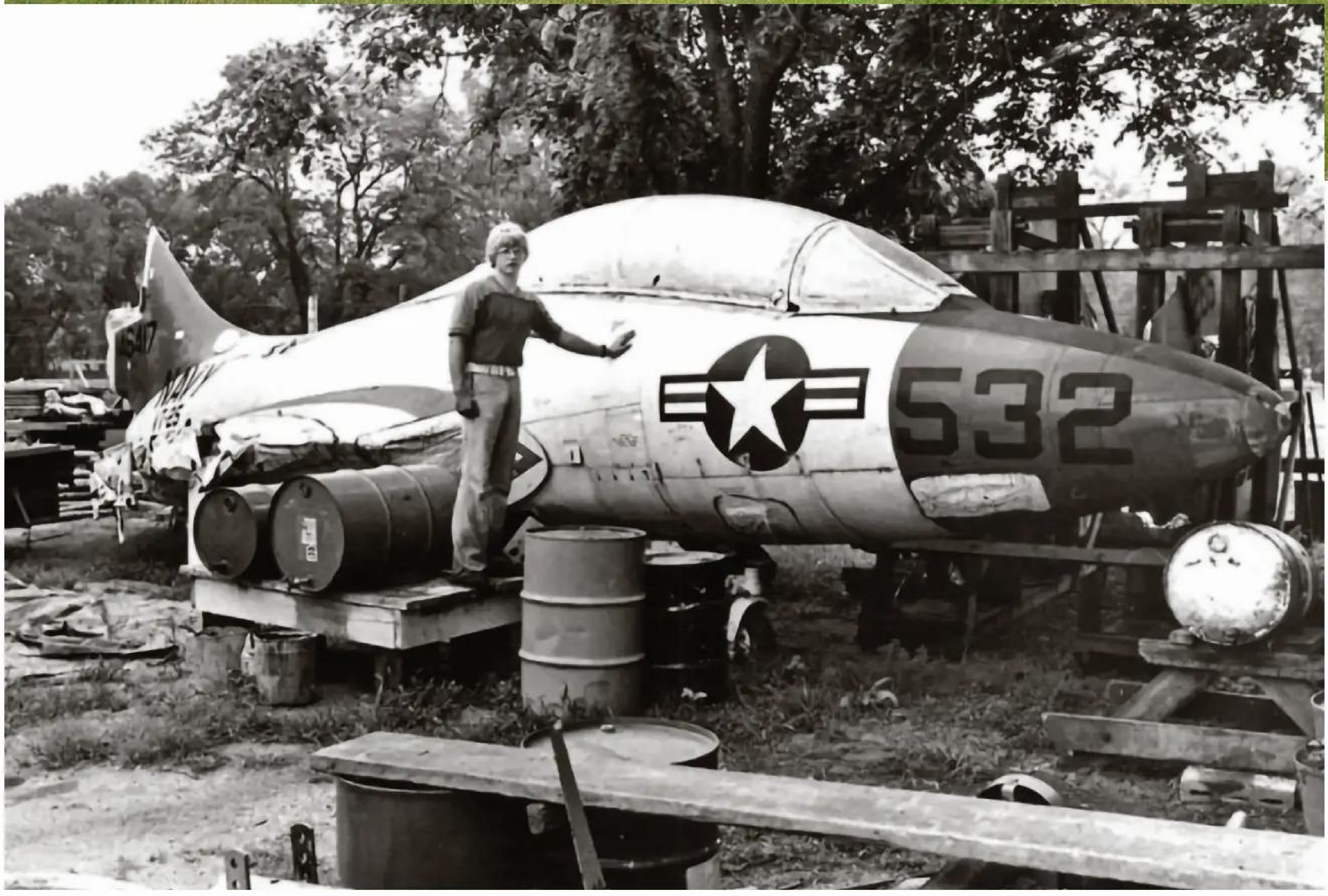
VMF-251 was a very interesting squadron but has not received much in the way of publicity. Commissioned on 1 December 1941 at NAS North Island as VMO-251, the unit was sent to New Caledonia flying Grumman F4F Wildcats and saw heavy action. In 1943, the squadron transition to the Corsair and became VMF-251. On 2 January 1945, 22 Corsairs from VMF-251 landed on Samar as part of MAG-14. The squadron continued operations from the Philippines until 1 May 1945 when it flew its last WWII



An open panel shows nests, corrosion, and rust from years of outside display.



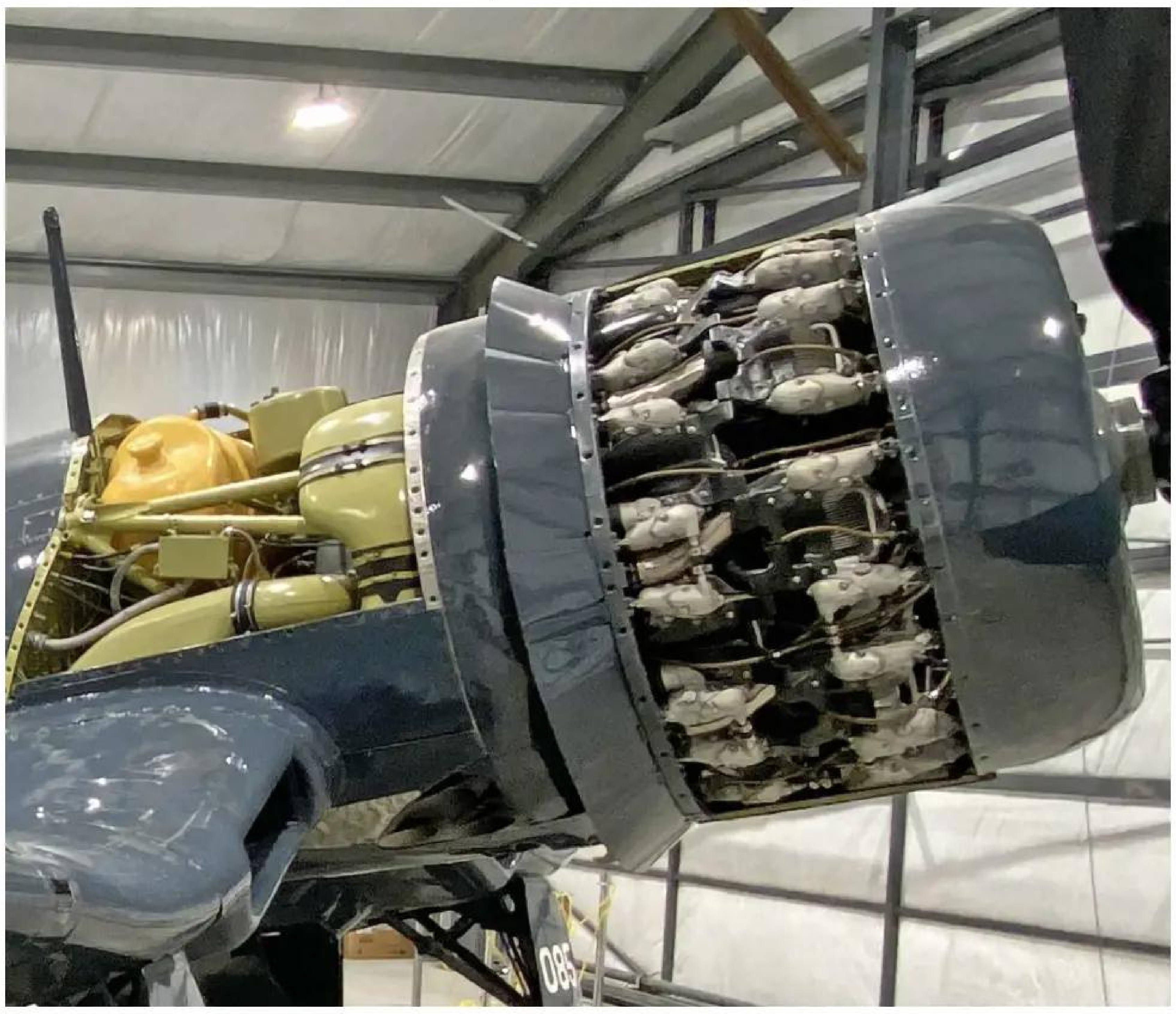
The two-seat Cougar eventually wound up at the Evergreen Air and Space Museum wearing a Blue Angels paint scheme.



This Grumman TF-9J Cougar was obtained to replace the Corsair but there is no evidence that it was ever placed on display.

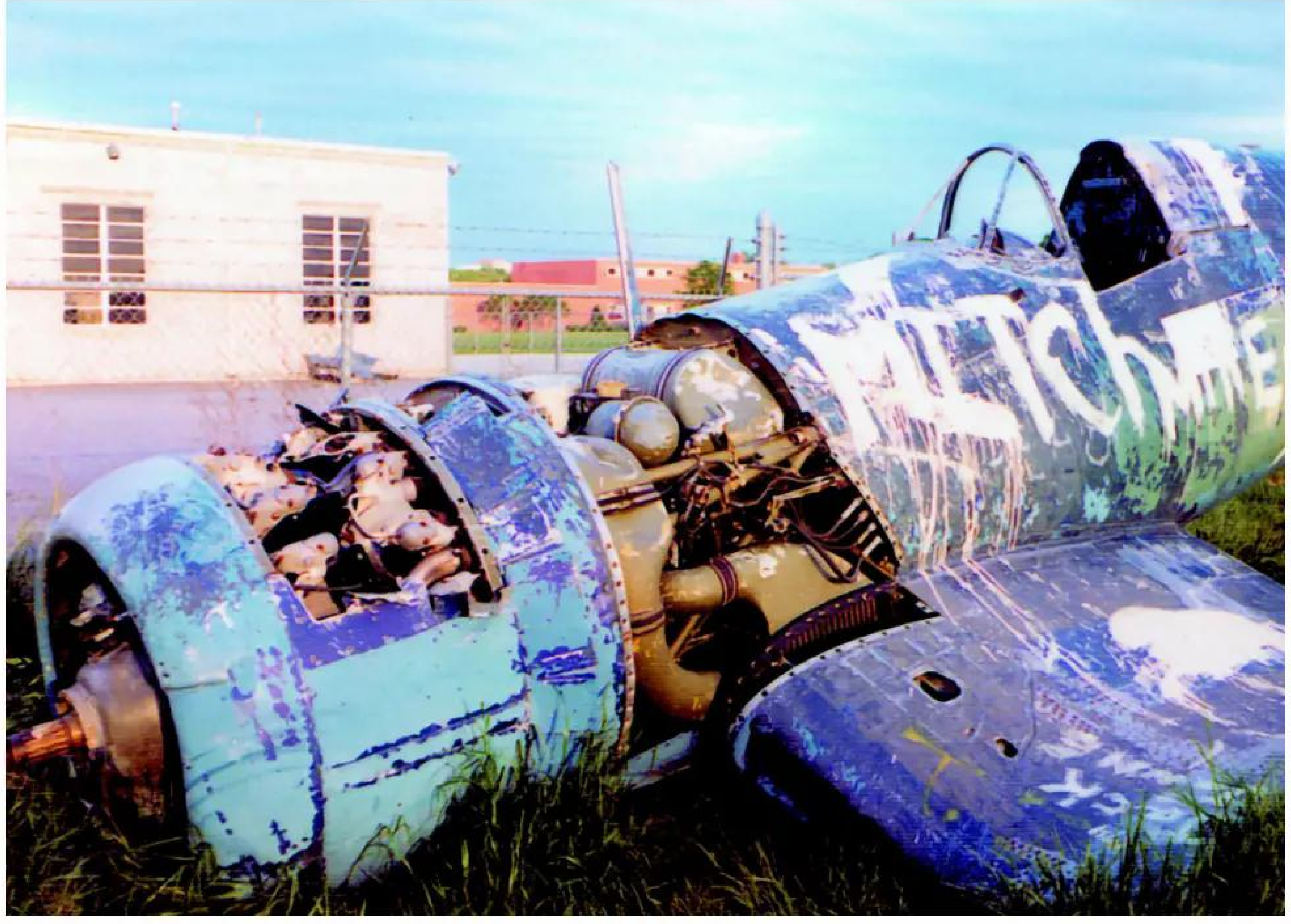
combat mission.

Colonel Zebulon Hawkins, CO of MAG-14, noted the following on VMF-251: "During the month of January 1945, this squadron [23 planes] flew 626 combat flights, totaling 2403 hours. From 1 October 1944 to 15 February 1945, the ground crew has maintained in commission 98% of the squadron's assigned aircraft. Not once, from June 1944, has it failed to execute an assigned mission because of failure to have the

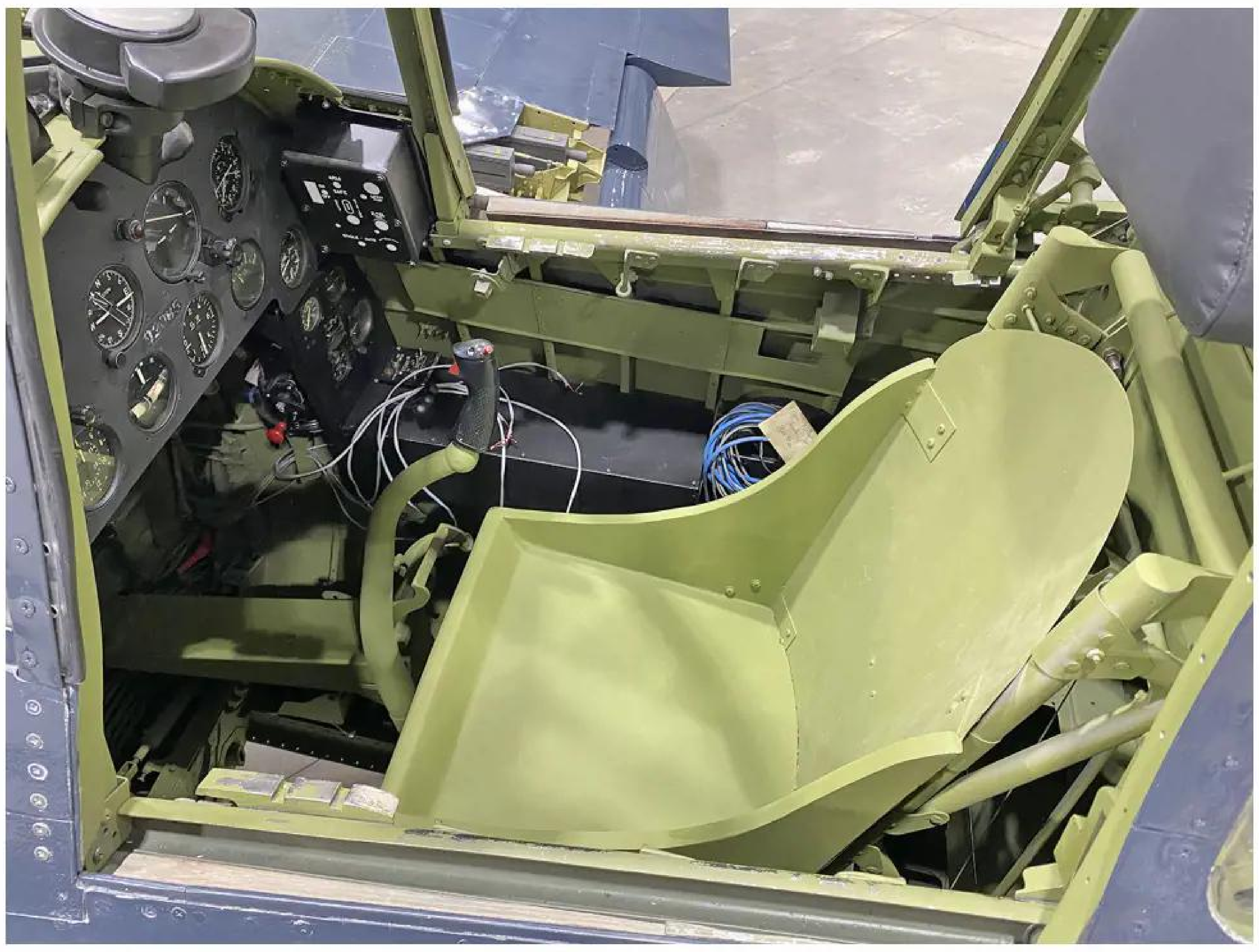


The R-2800 engine and accessories area were also in very bad condition and needed considerable restoration work.

Repairing a section of cowling.



After the Corsair was removed from the park, it was dumped in a vacant lot where its condition continued to go downhill.

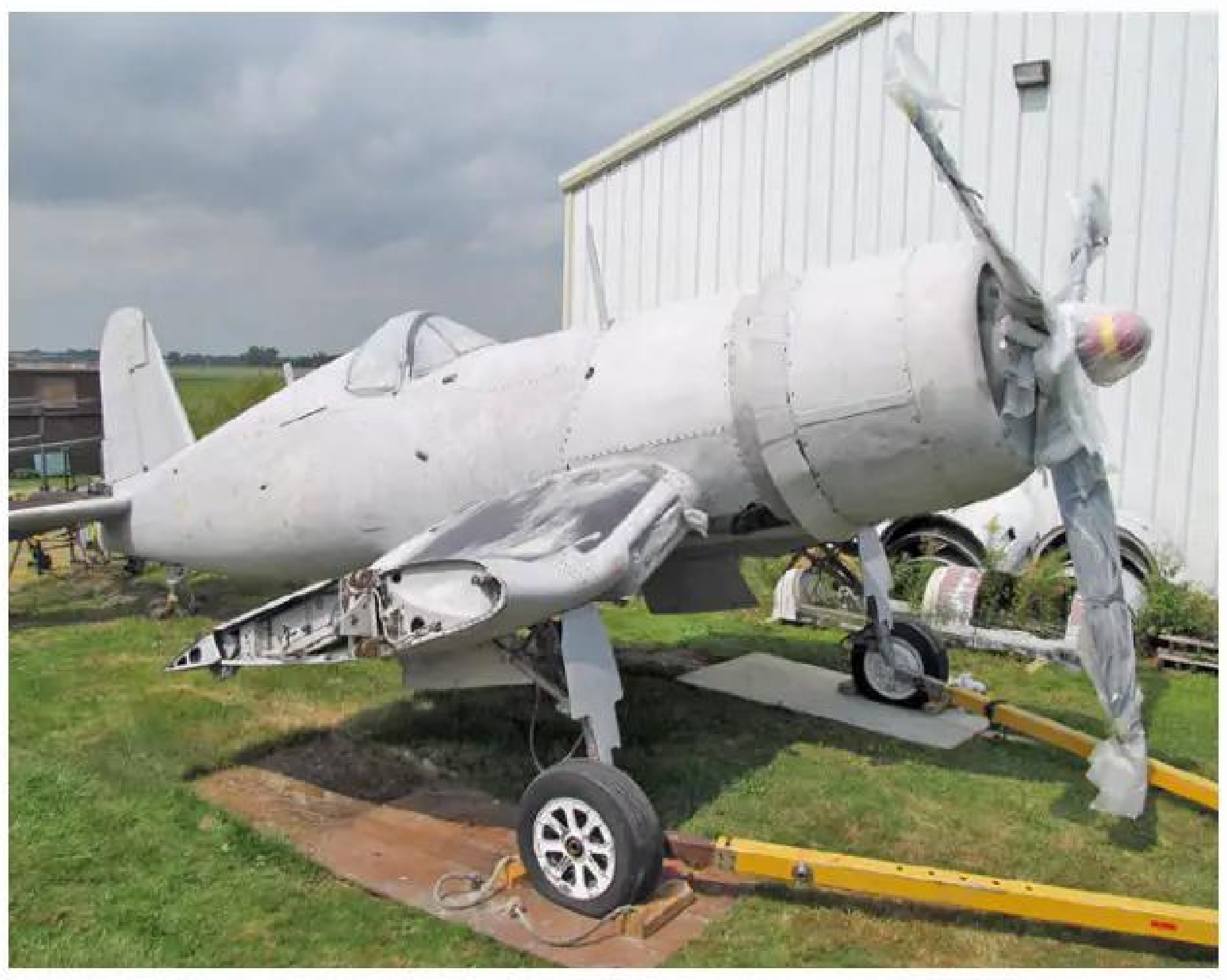


A new pilot's seat had to be fabricated.

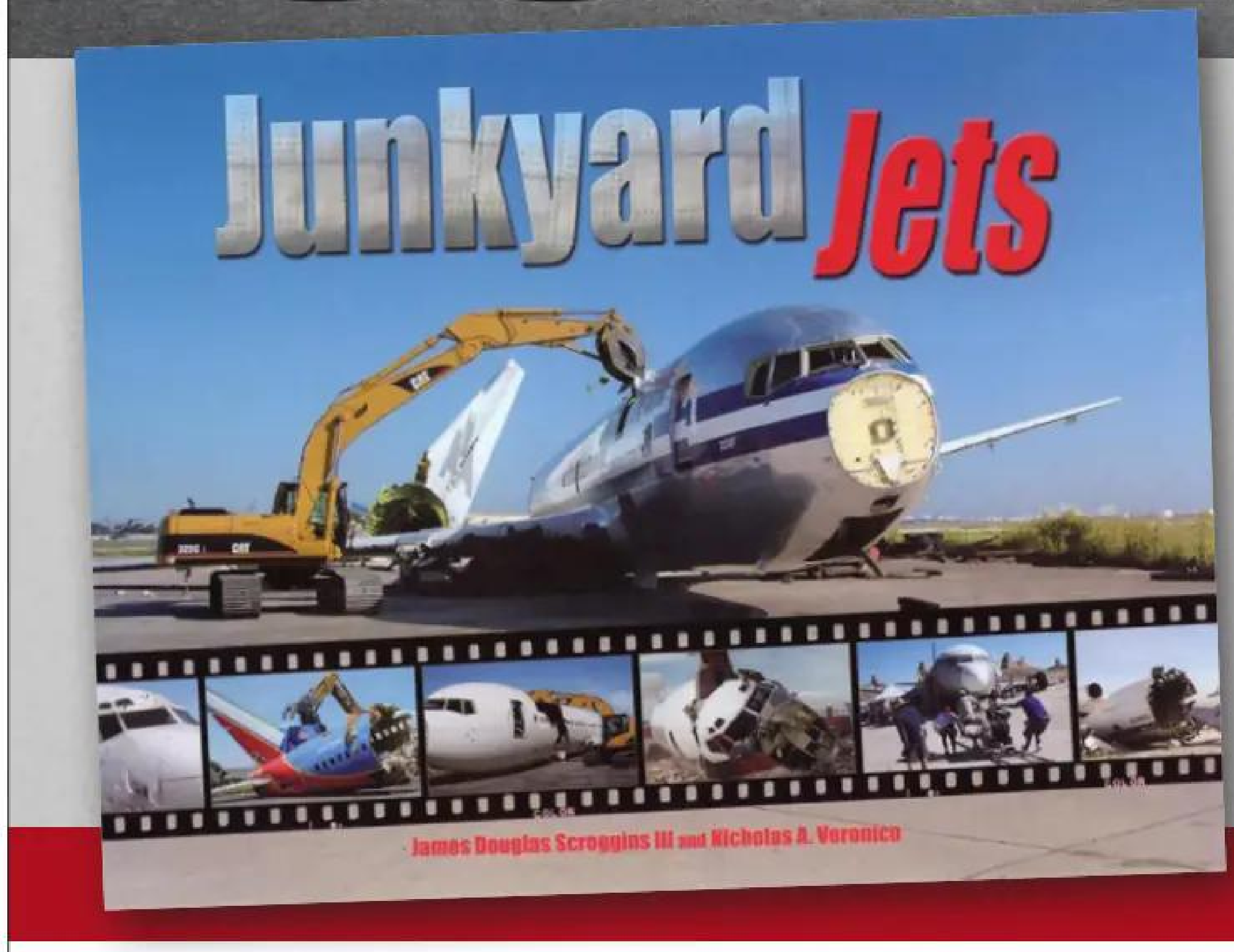
necessary planes in commission. Since 23 July 1944, this squadron has not lost a plane or pilot because of failure or malfunctioning of its aircraft."

On 1 June 1945, VMF-251 was deactivated at Samar, Philippines. On 1 July 1946, VMF-251 was reactivated at Grosse Ile, Michigan, as part of the new post-war Naval Air Reserve.

A side story to this endeavor is that once the quality of the second restoration team's efforts became evident, it was decided that the aircraft should not be put back into the Museum's Air Park where the ravages of the Michigan weather would inevitably lead to a repeat of the damage and corrosion experienced after the first restoration. In 2018, it was decided to construct a new facility to house the aircraft. A fundraising effort was initiated and, through various activities, a new 50 by 80-foot hangar was constructed and became



The fuselage after receiving a primer coat.



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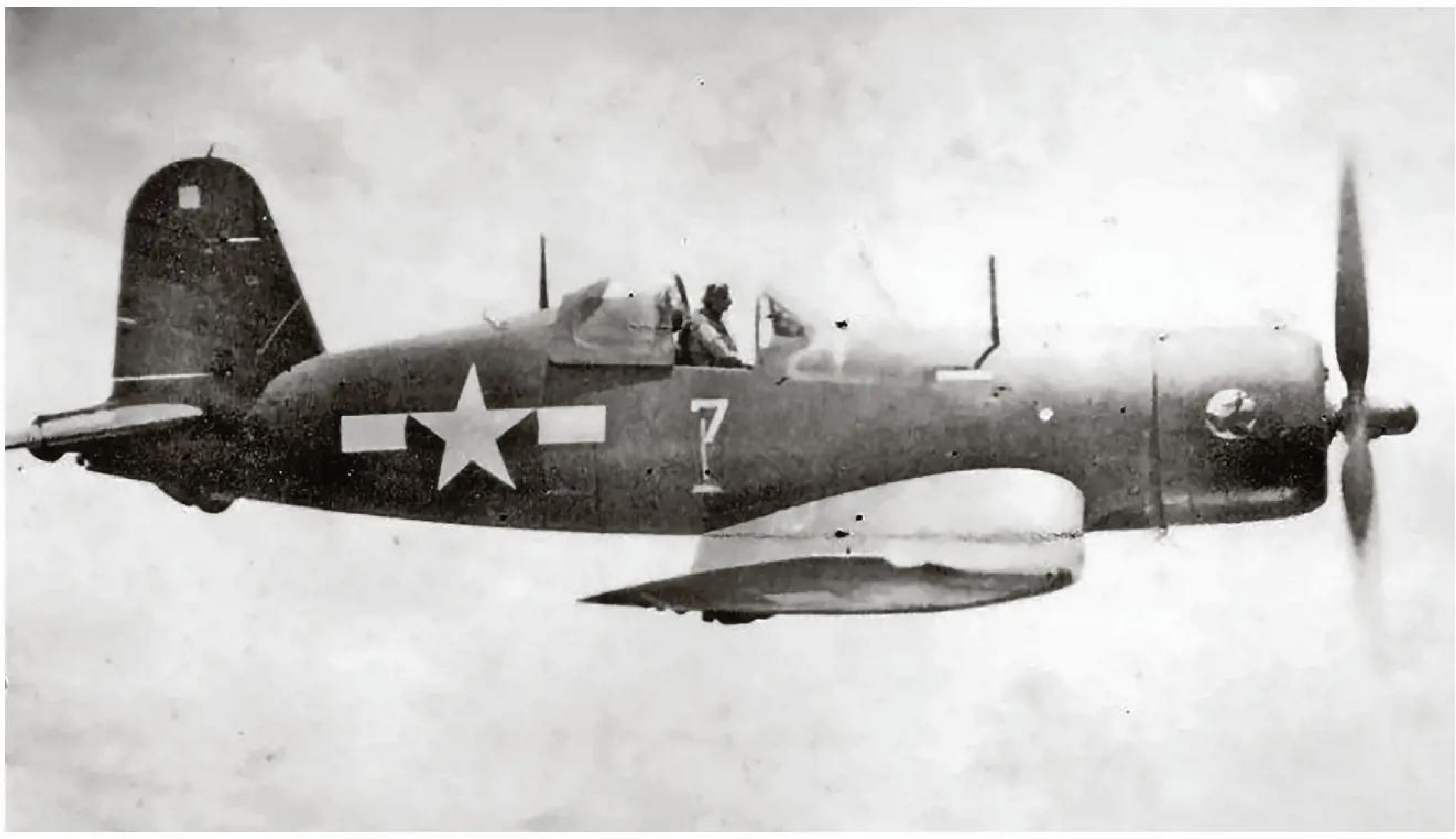
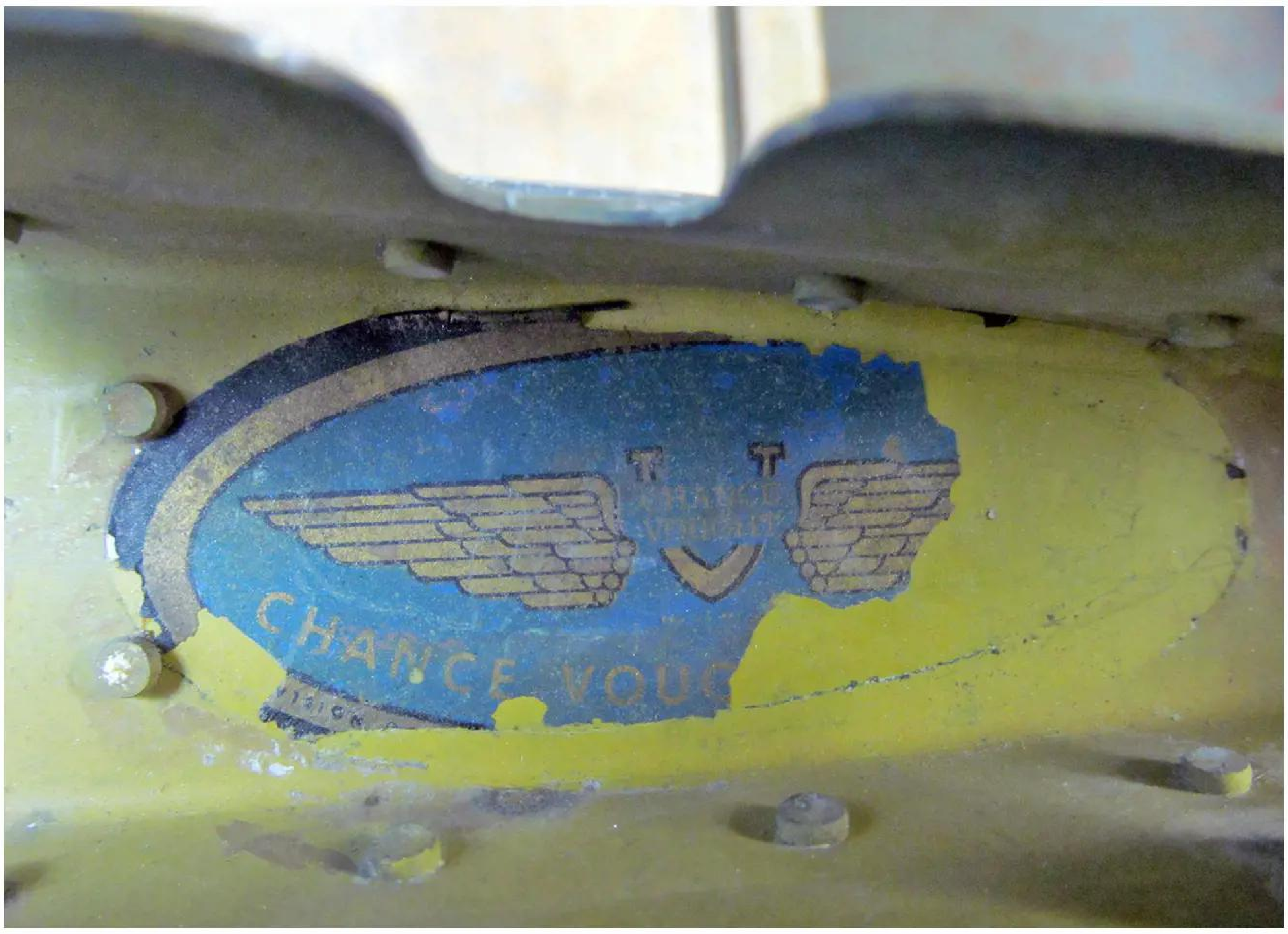
the home of the completed FG-1D. In 2023, the Museum was given the wreckage of a replica Curtiss JN-4 Jenny, and once that restoration is completed, it will join the Corsair and provide the foundation to the Museum's new Aviation Education Center.

The completed Corsair required the effort of nearly 50 volunteers who put in some 35,000 hours of work over nearly ten years. The stunning result was rolled out in a special ceremony on 13 September 2024. Since then, new efforts are being made to further enhance its display. It is now one of the highlights of this superb museum. **AC**



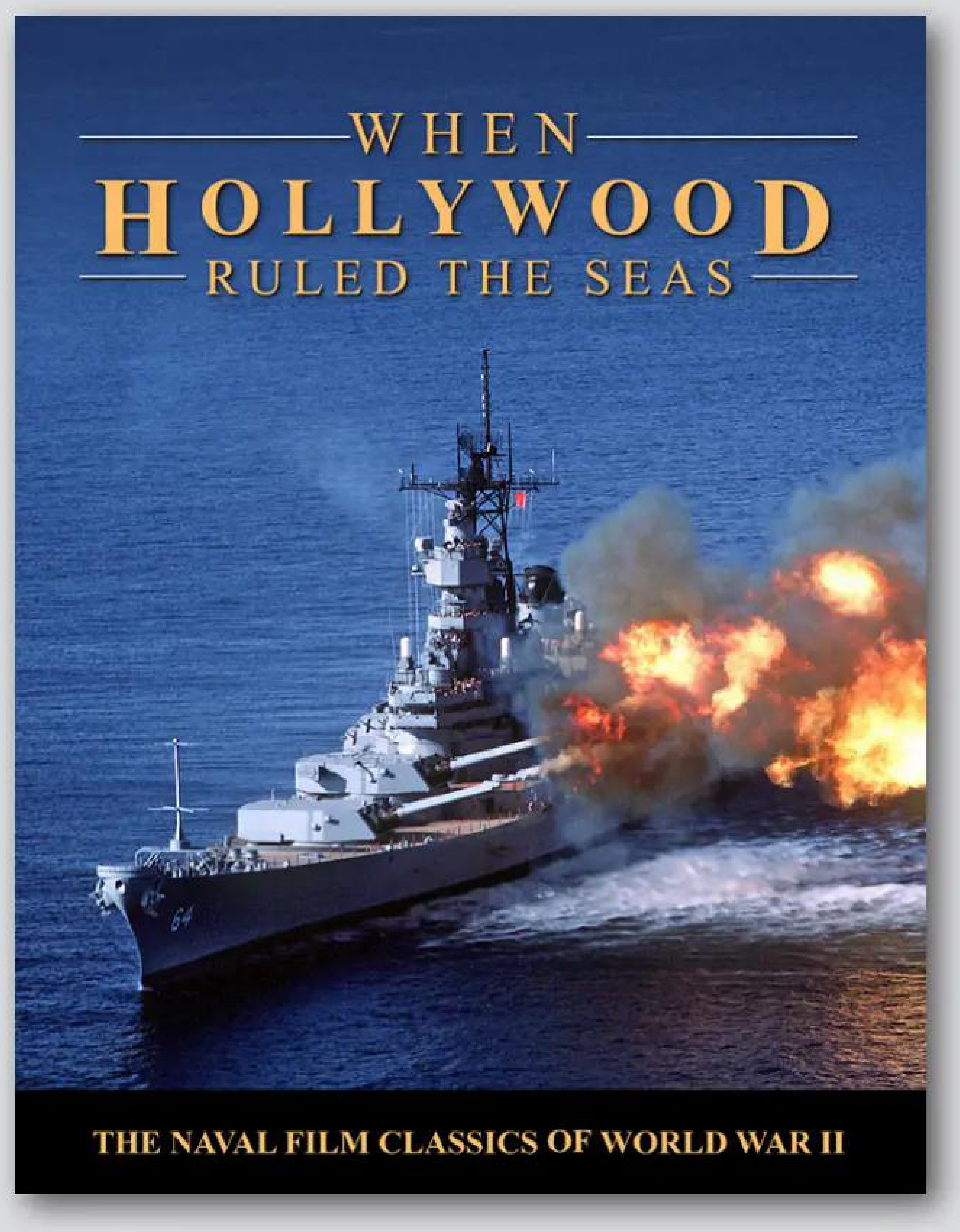
It was decided to paint the FG-1D in the markings of a VMF-251 F4U-1D flown by Lt. Whisenhant with the large squadron insignia on the nose.

Rebuilding the control surfaces.



An original Vought decal uncovered during the restoration process. A vast amount of sheet metal work had to be accomplished during the second restoration due to the corrosion that had developed during years of outside display.

Some of the volunteer restoration team with the completed aircraft.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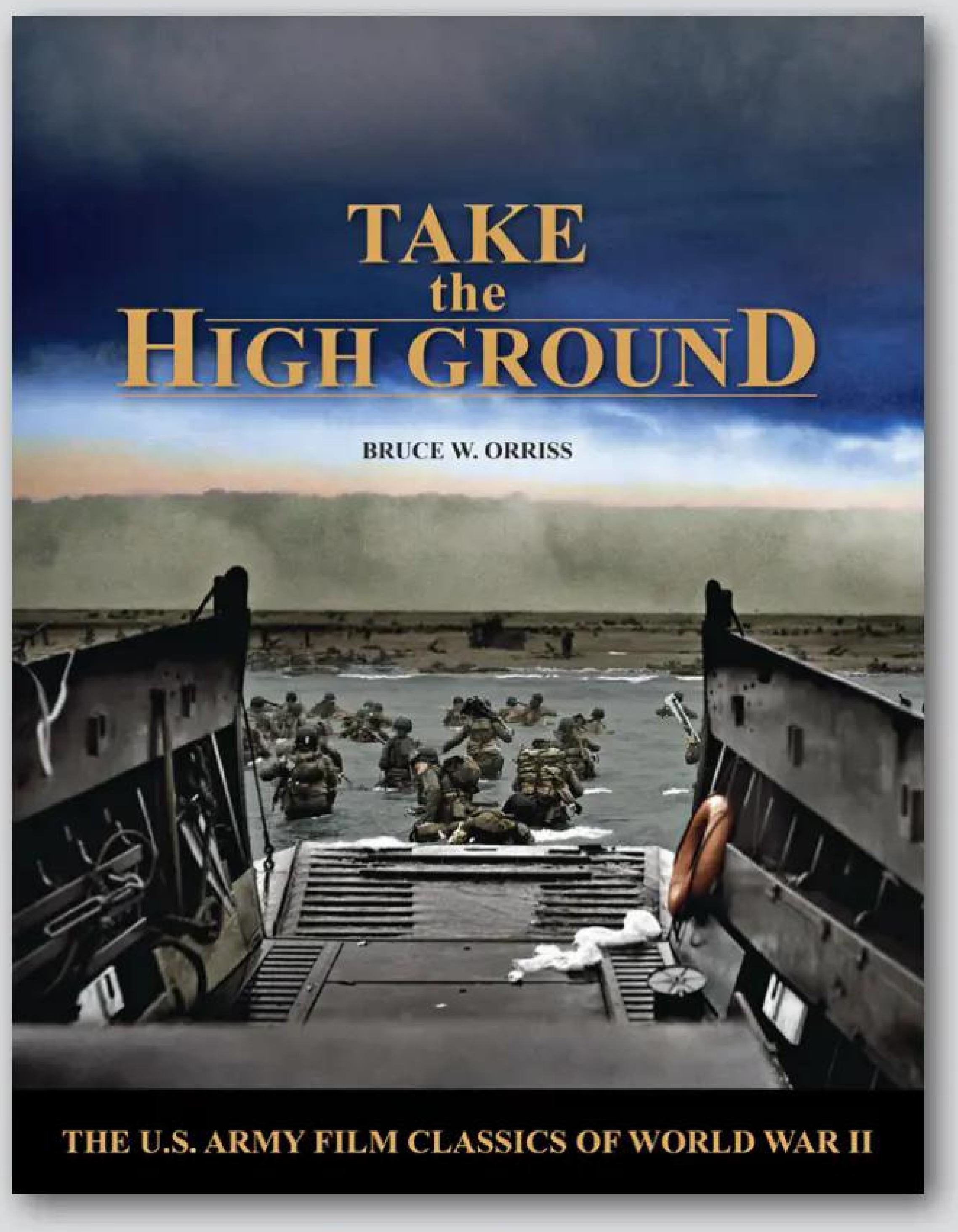
RULED THE SEAS
THE NAVAL FILM CLASSICS OF WORLD WAR II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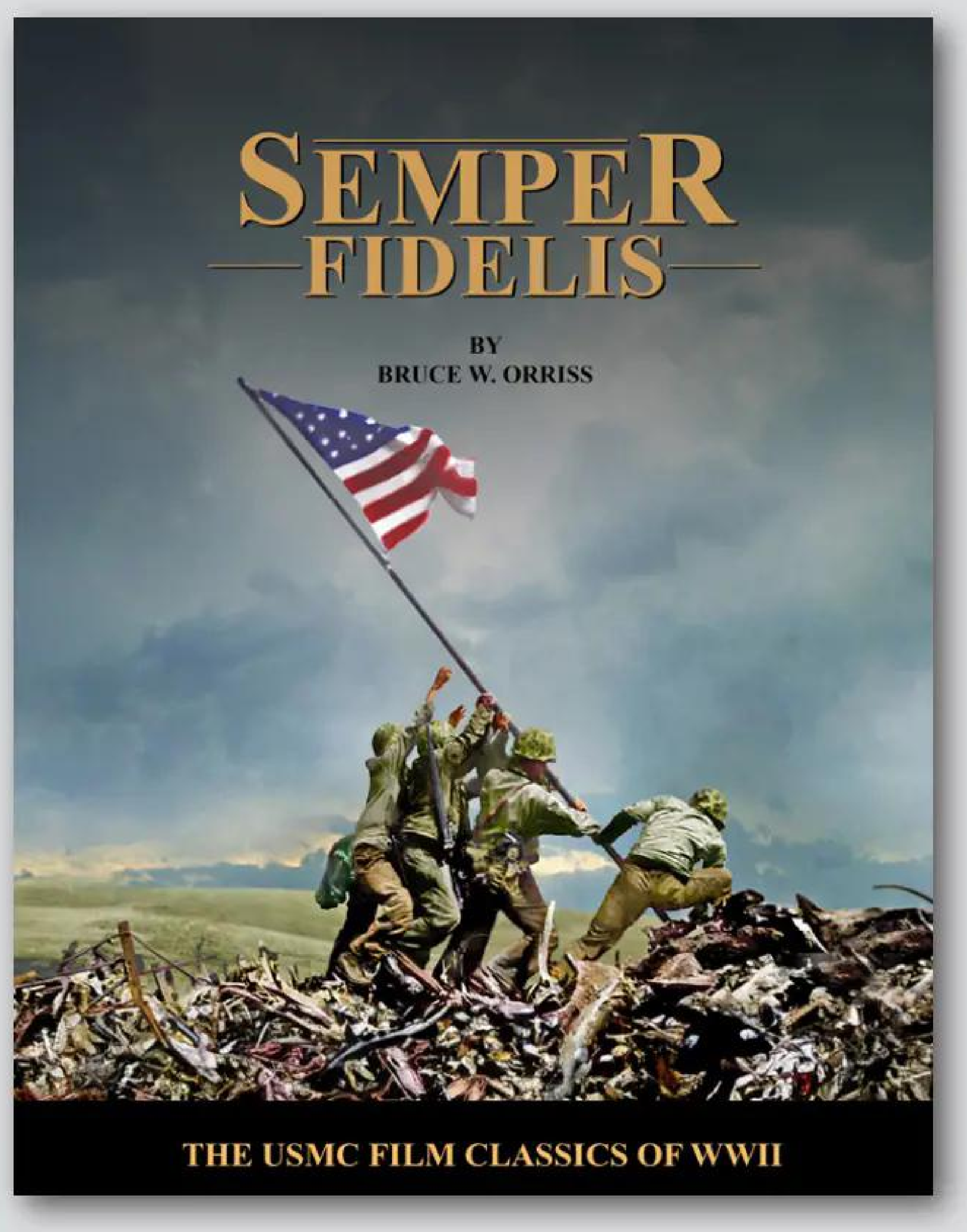
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KEEPING THE GOONIES FLYING

LOCATED IN OSHKOSH, WISCONSIN, BASLER TURBO CONVERSIONS IS SUPPLYING REBUILT DC-3 TRANSPORTS TO FAR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE

BY RALPH M. PETTERSEN

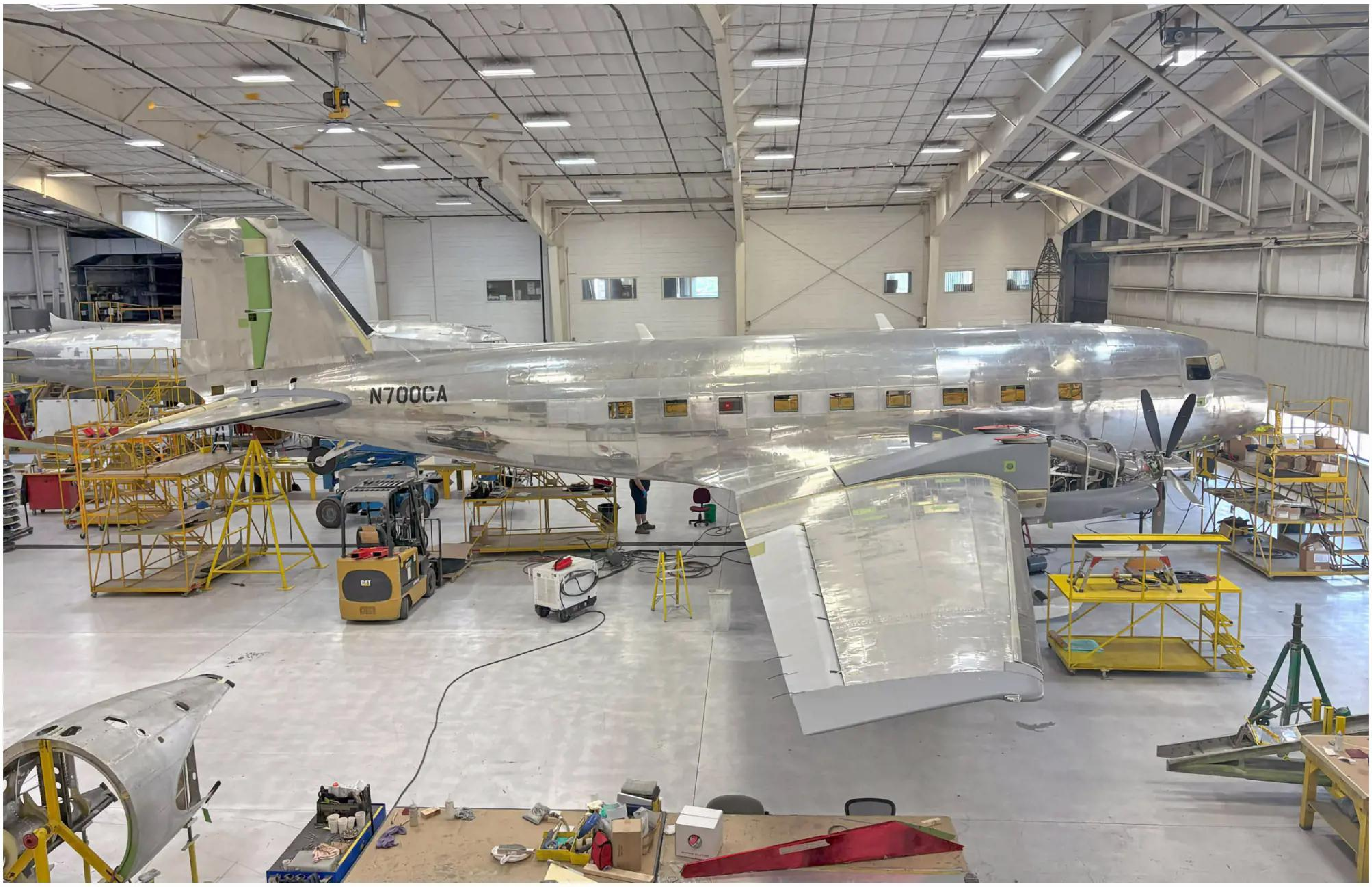
Everything down, a Basler BT-67 comes in for landing. Each conversion takes about 50,000 man-hours but specific customer requirements often add more time to the process.

DC-3
90TH ANNIVERSARY

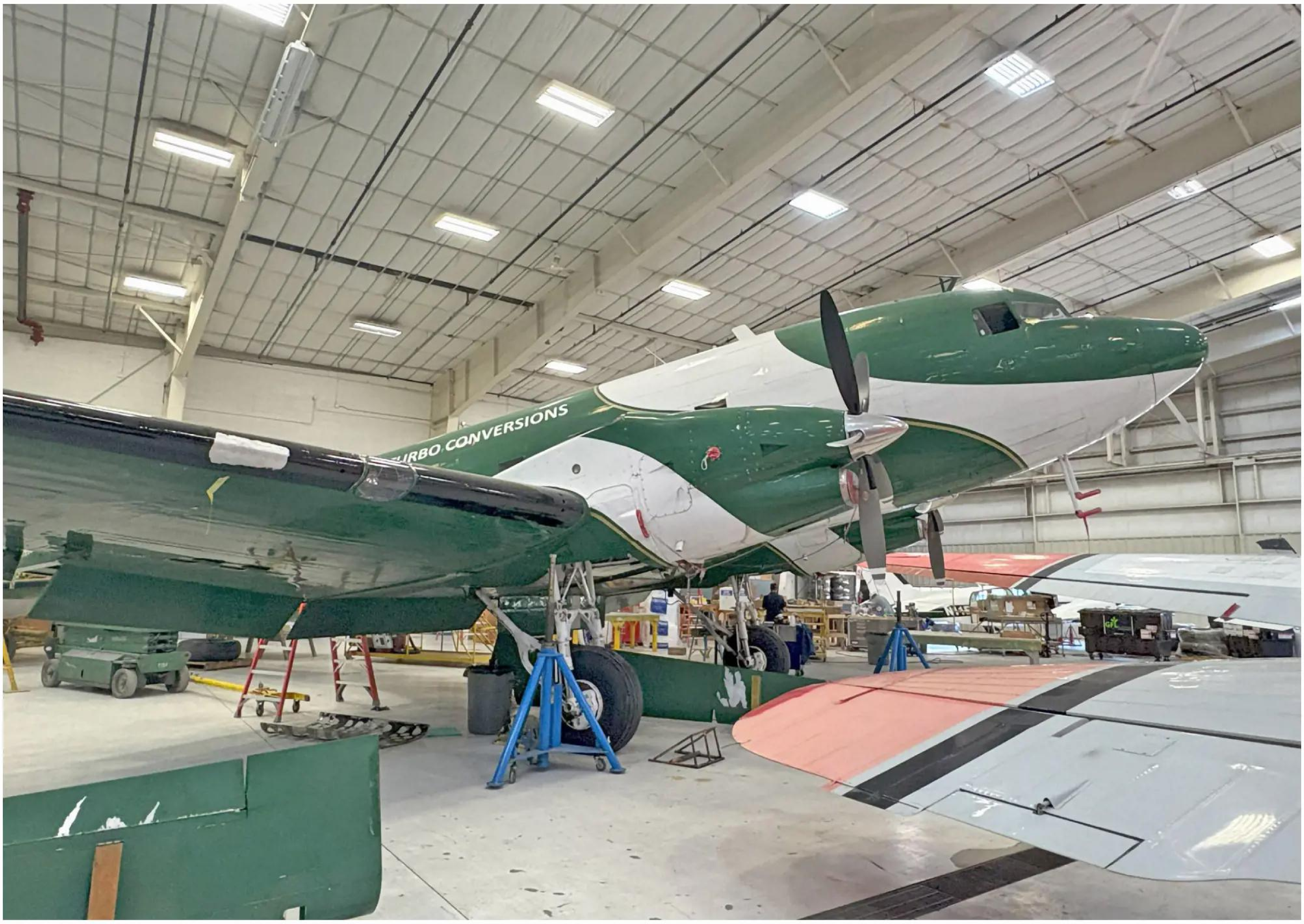
Having last visited Basler Turbo Conversions during August 2021, I thought I would take the opportunity to visit the company's Oshkosh, Wisconsin, facility while on a recent trip to nearby Madison. I contacted company president Joe Varkoly and he agreed to a visit thus allowing me to update readers about the latest status of the company's DC-3/BT-67 turbine conversion program. Joe has always been very friendly to the ever-curious enthusiast community and he greeted me in the lobby. The tour was off and running after a short stop at his office where he gave me a brief overview of Basler's current and planned efforts.

Our first stop was the main hangar where technicians were putting the final touches on the latest conversion. Douglas N700CA (Basler Conversion #71) was delivered this past summer to an Argentine company which plans on basing it in Ushuaia, flying tourists to Antarctica and throughout Patagonia. They plan on establishing a base in Ushuaia after performing initial pilot training in Oshkosh.

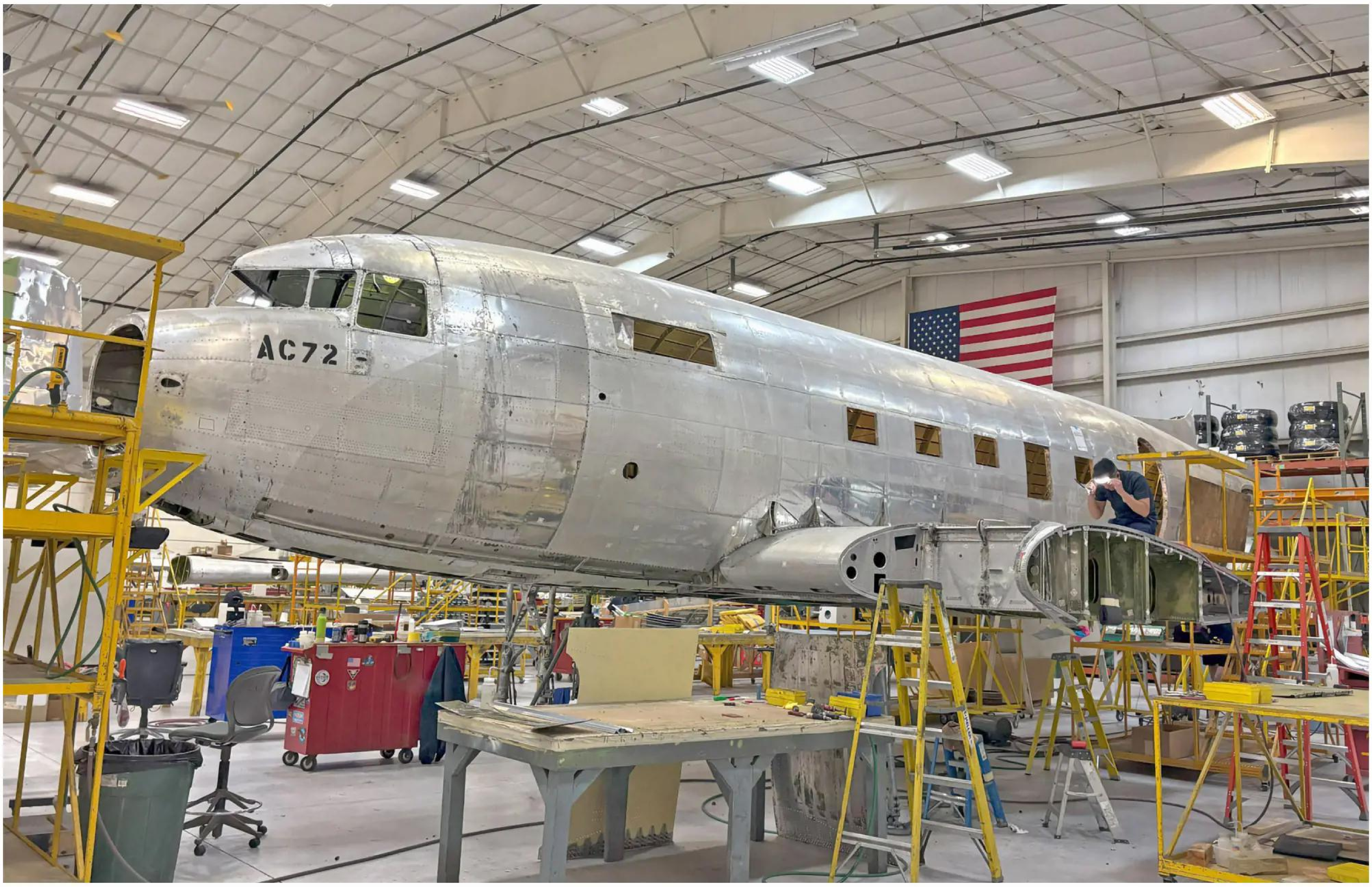
Conversion #71 is equipped with skis, which add 1200 pounds to its gross weight and slows the airplane about 5/10-mph. Like other BT-67s flown in Antarctica, this aircraft is equipped with metal rudder and elevators, which are better suited to the harsh Antarctic environment in which the aircraft operate. The metal control surfaces add about 375-pounds to versus one with fabric covered control surfaces. N700CA



Gleaming in its bare metal finish, N700CA displays the various Basler modification including the P&WC turbine engine, fuselage extension, and squared wingtips.



Most of the conversions wear very distinctive paint schemes and N300BF is no exception.



N227GB (Basler Conversion 72) at the start of the process that will turn the plane into an efficient money-making aircraft that will take the type well beyond its 100th anniversary.

has fabric-covered ailerons, which are standard on all BT-67s. The BT-67 is used extensively in Antarctica and Joe noted that upwards of 15 to 18 are based there during the summer months performing a variety of scientific and other support missions — truly amazing considering the design is celebrating its 90th anniversary.

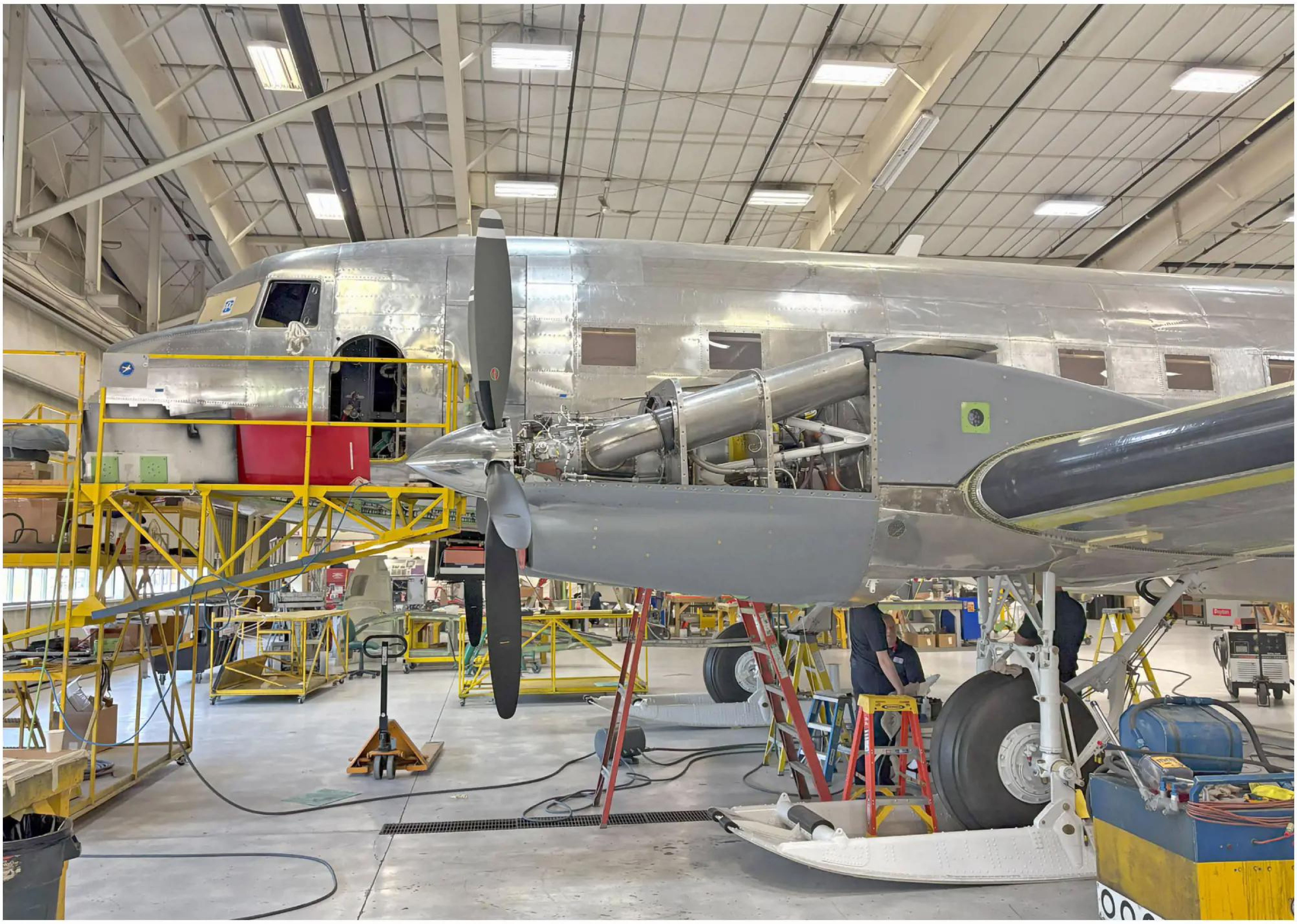
N227GB (Basler Conversion #72) was also in the hangar and had been stripped clean with work just beginning on the conversion. N115SA (Basler Conversion #73) was parked on the tarmac outside the main hangar minus wings and empennage. Working under the supervision of a Basler technician, a small crew of college summer hires were stripping out all the wiring and mechanicals not required for the conversion. Once this is complete, the aircraft will join #72 in the main hangar. While not set in stone, it is more than likely that N68CW (wearing North Cariboo titles) will be conversion #74.

The prototype N300BF and N115U (Basler Conversion #7) were in the second hangar. N300BF is not a "real" BT-67 and has recently received some TLC. The aircraft is a one-of-a-kind

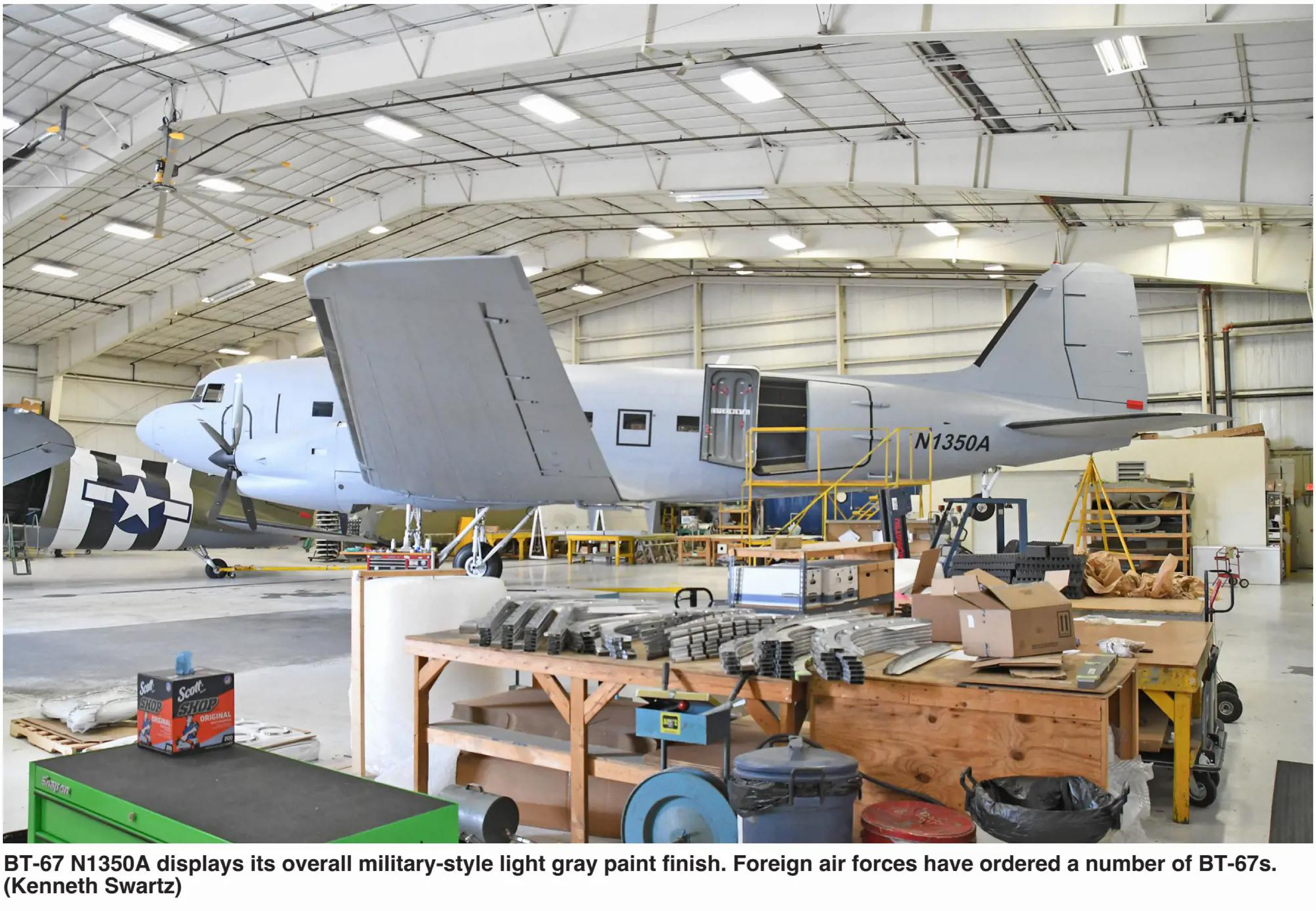
BASLER
TURBO CONVERSIONS

The company's headquarters at Oshkosh.

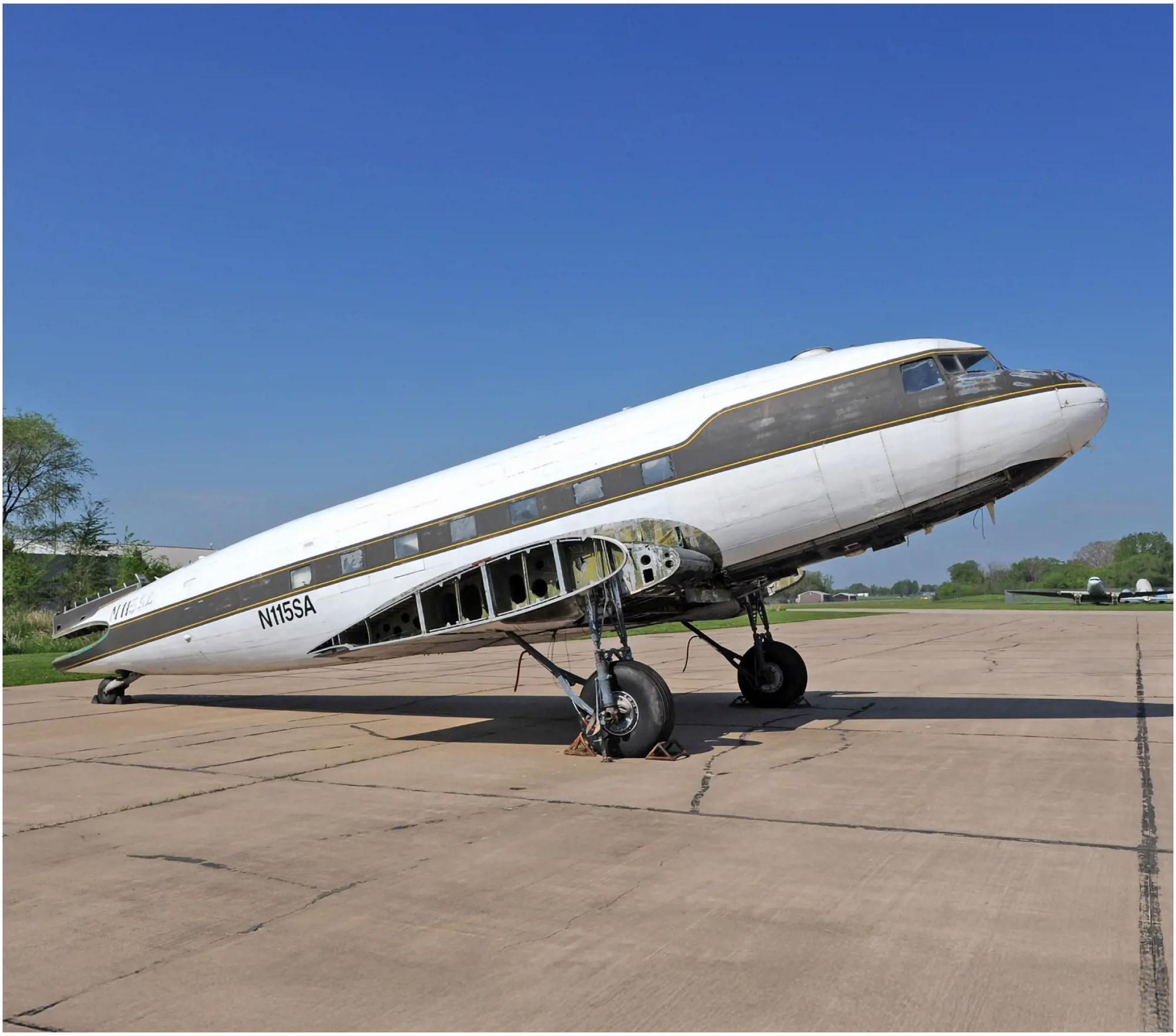
N700CA and N227GB undergoing the conversion process.



Installing the P&WC turbine with its five-blade prop in the custom nacelle.



BT-67 N1350A displays its overall military-style light gray paint finish. Foreign air forces have ordered a number of BT-67s. (Kenneth Swartz)



N115SA on the Basler ramp awaiting its turn for conversion.

Gooney Bird that was converted by United States Aircraft Corporation (USAC) in 1982 at Van Nuys Airport. The company named it the "Turbo Express" and, while not a true BT-67, it was the first aircraft converted to what would become the Basler BT-67. The conversion included a 40-inch fuselage extension, 1197-hp P&W Canada PT-6A-45R engines, five-bladed Hartzell propellers, squared off wingtips, flat-sided cowlings and top mounted engine exhausts. It was the first turboprop DC-3 conversion to obtain FAA certification, which was granted in March 1984. It's interesting to note that the PT-6A-45R engines chosen had about the same horsepower as the piston engines they were replacing so there wasn't much in the way of increased performance other than enhanced engine reliability.

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The machine shop with many conversion components displayed on the wall.

Airframes for future conversions are stored next to the factory.

North C
N68CW

One of the stored aircraft is N68CW, which last saw service with North Cariboo. (K. Swartz)

N115U (Basler Conversion #7) was converted 30+ years ago for the US Forest Service as N115Z and was acquired by Basler after retirement from the USFS in December 2015. Since that time, Basler has used the plane for pilot training and it has also offered it for lease. The aircraft was leased to Anchorage-based Desert Air Alaska in 2023, who used it extensively hauling cargo to small Alaskan communities throughout the state. It is currently available for lease.

In addition to these aircraft, Basler currently has 14 DC-3 candidate airframes stored in their storage yard in Oshkosh.

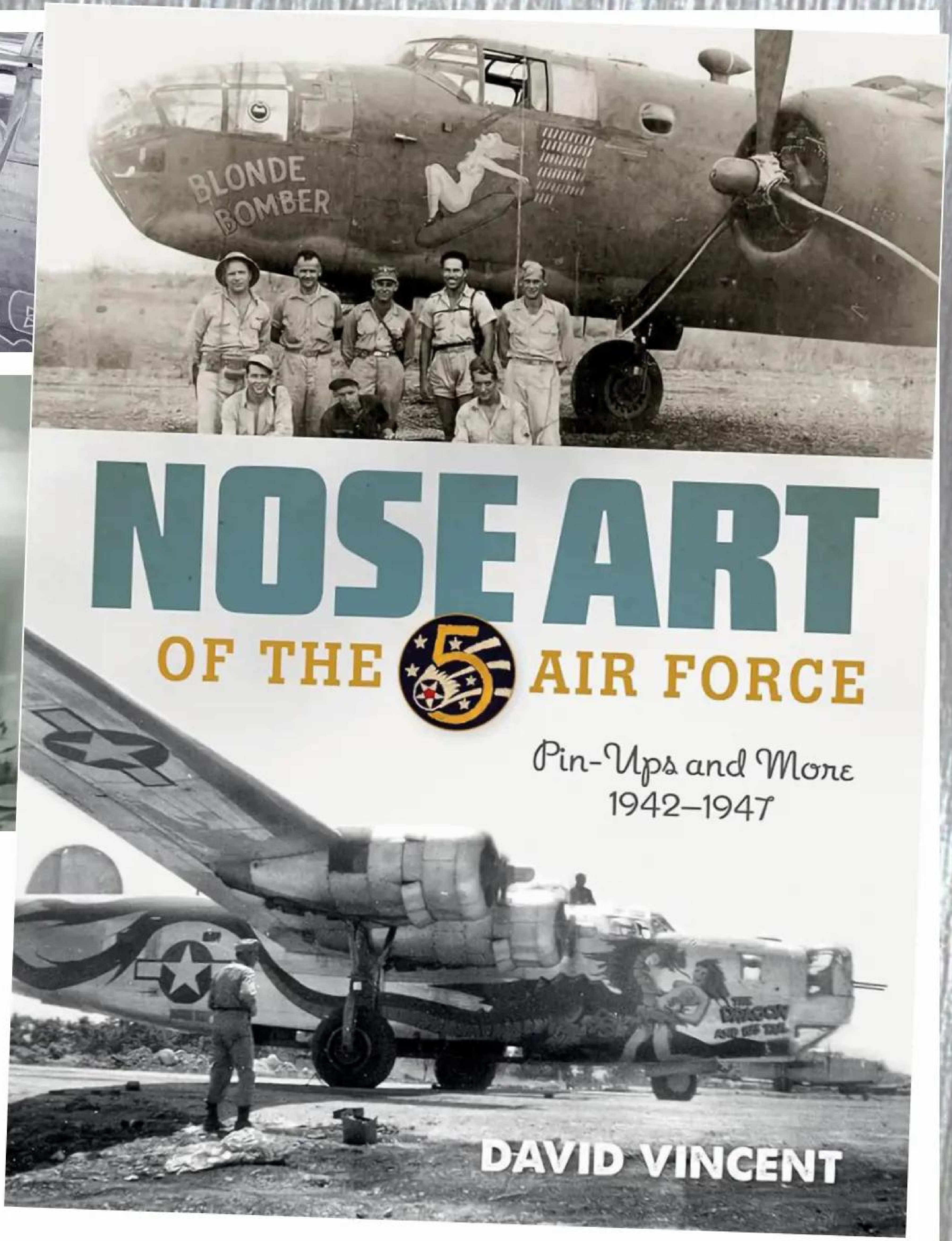
I asked why the delivery of #68 (N1350A), #69 (N941AT), and #70 (N856RB) had been held up for so long, with the three aircraft being delivered to Tullahoma, Tennessee, in January and February 2025. Joe said that all three were built for the Theia Group, an aerospace start-up company that wanted to launch satellites that would have provided real time mapping of the earth. The company was in receivership and the sale of the three aircraft to a New York City-based investment company was delayed for a number of years until all the legal matters were sorted out.

On a personal note, Joe stated he was retiring and would be replaced by the current Director of Operations, Derek James. I met Derek and I'm hoping that he will be as "enthusiast-friendly" as Joe has been during his seven-year tenure as Basler's president. I'll miss Joe's friendly tours and wish him good health and prosperity in his retirement. I assured him that, from my experience, retirement is a great lifestyle!

BASLER UPDATE

BT-67 N700CA #71 was registered LV-VYL and made a multi-day ferry flight from Oshkosh to Argentina in August 2025. Unfortunately, this aircraft came to grief and details can be found in Doug Fisher's "Warbird & Classic Report" in this issue. BT-67s N1350A #68, N941AT #69, and N856RB #70 were bought back from the New York Investment firm by Basler and are for sale and currently located in Oshkosh. N856RB served a brief stint in Alaska this past summer presumably flying for Desert Air Alaska before being replaced by BT-67 N115U #7. **AC**

MISS MURPHY
MAY 4, 1944
I DID MY SHARE
DID YOU?



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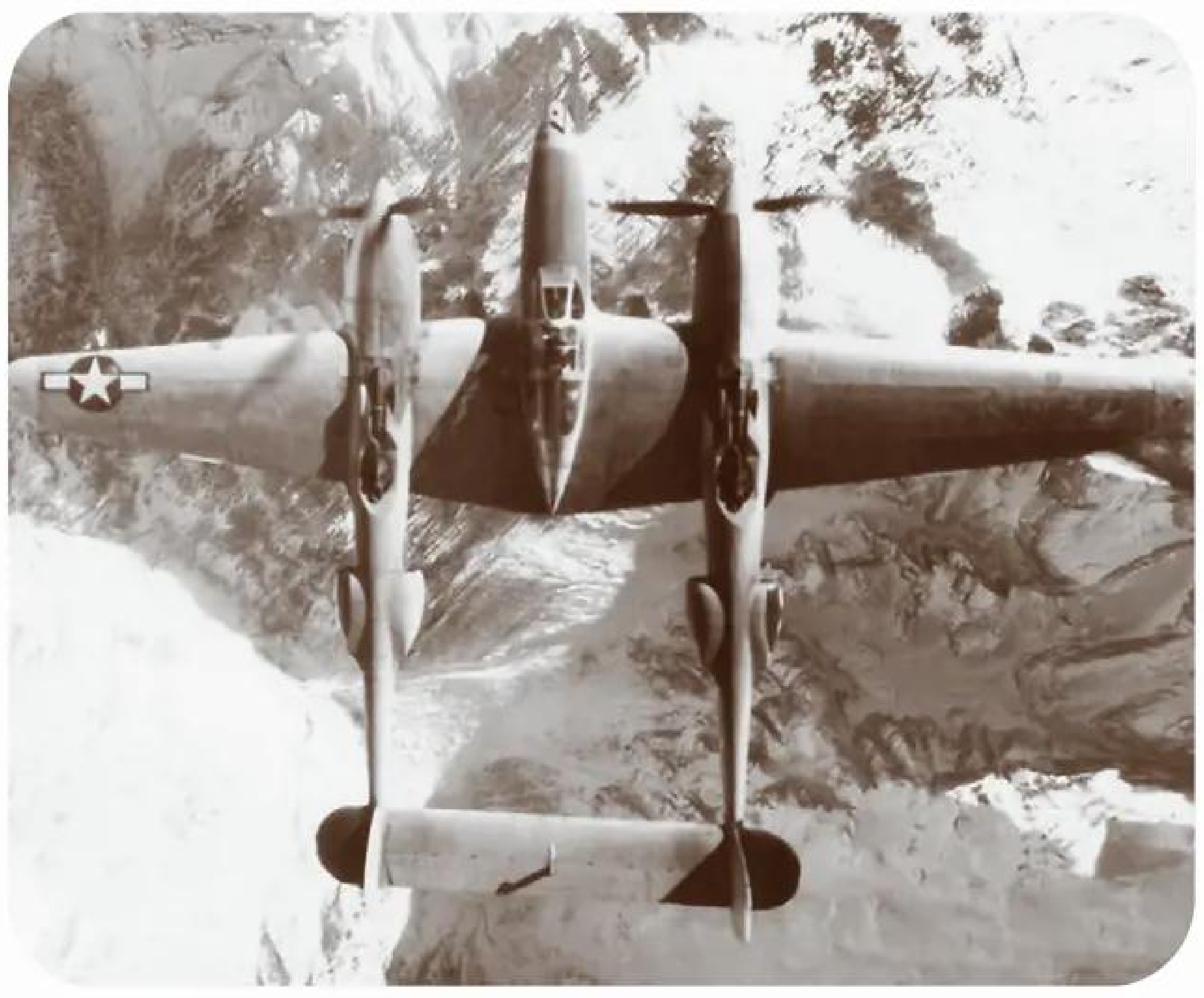

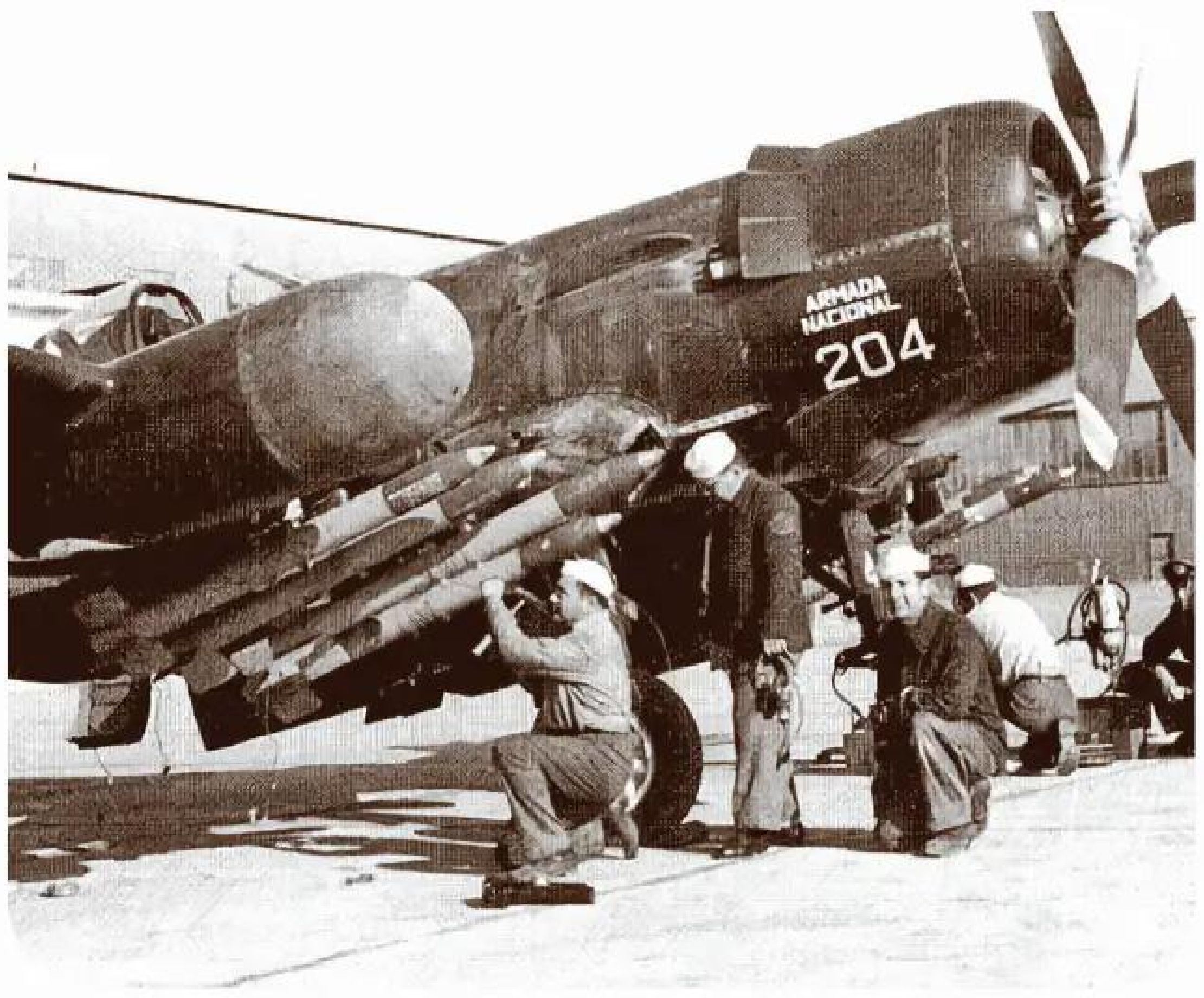
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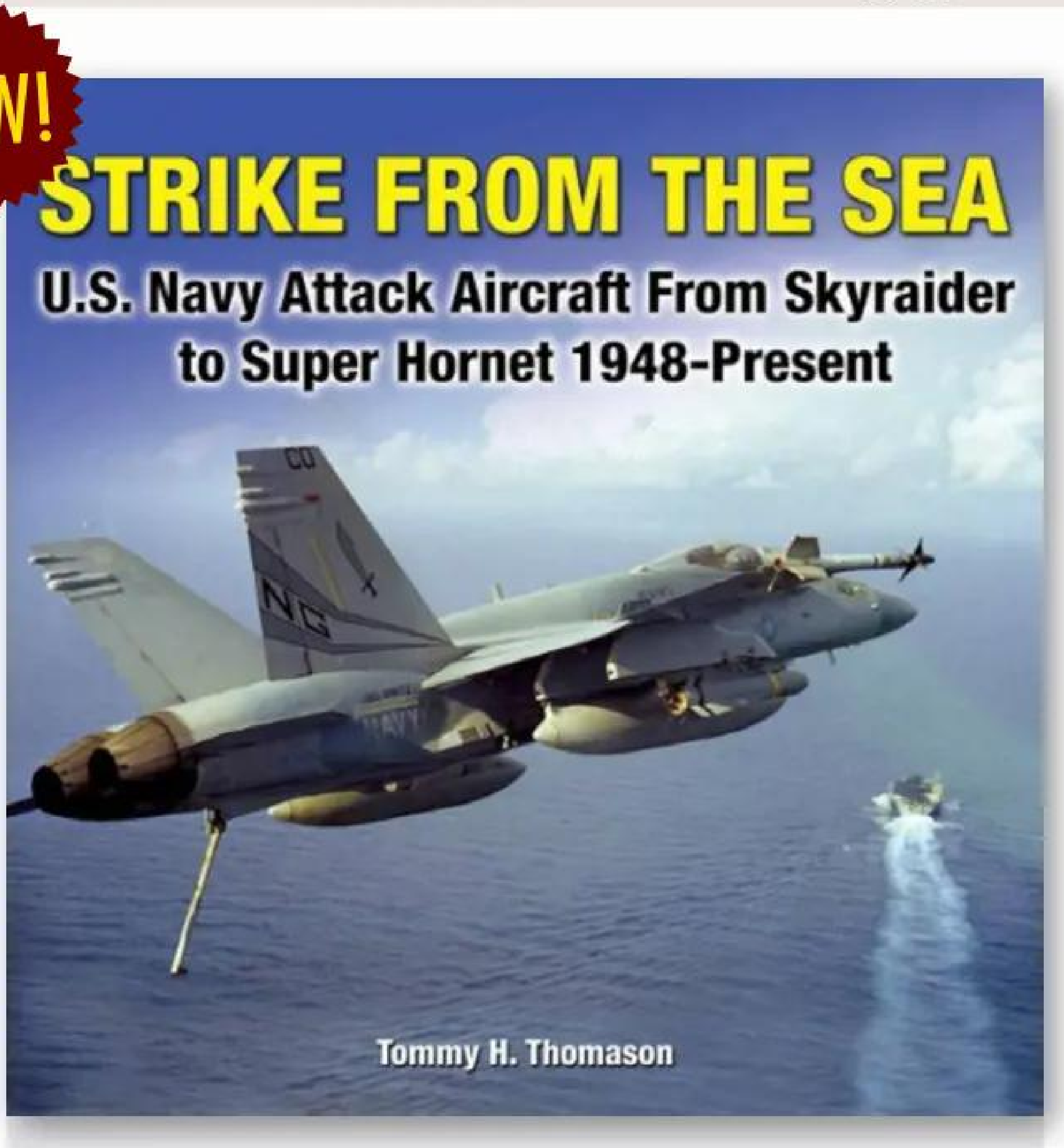
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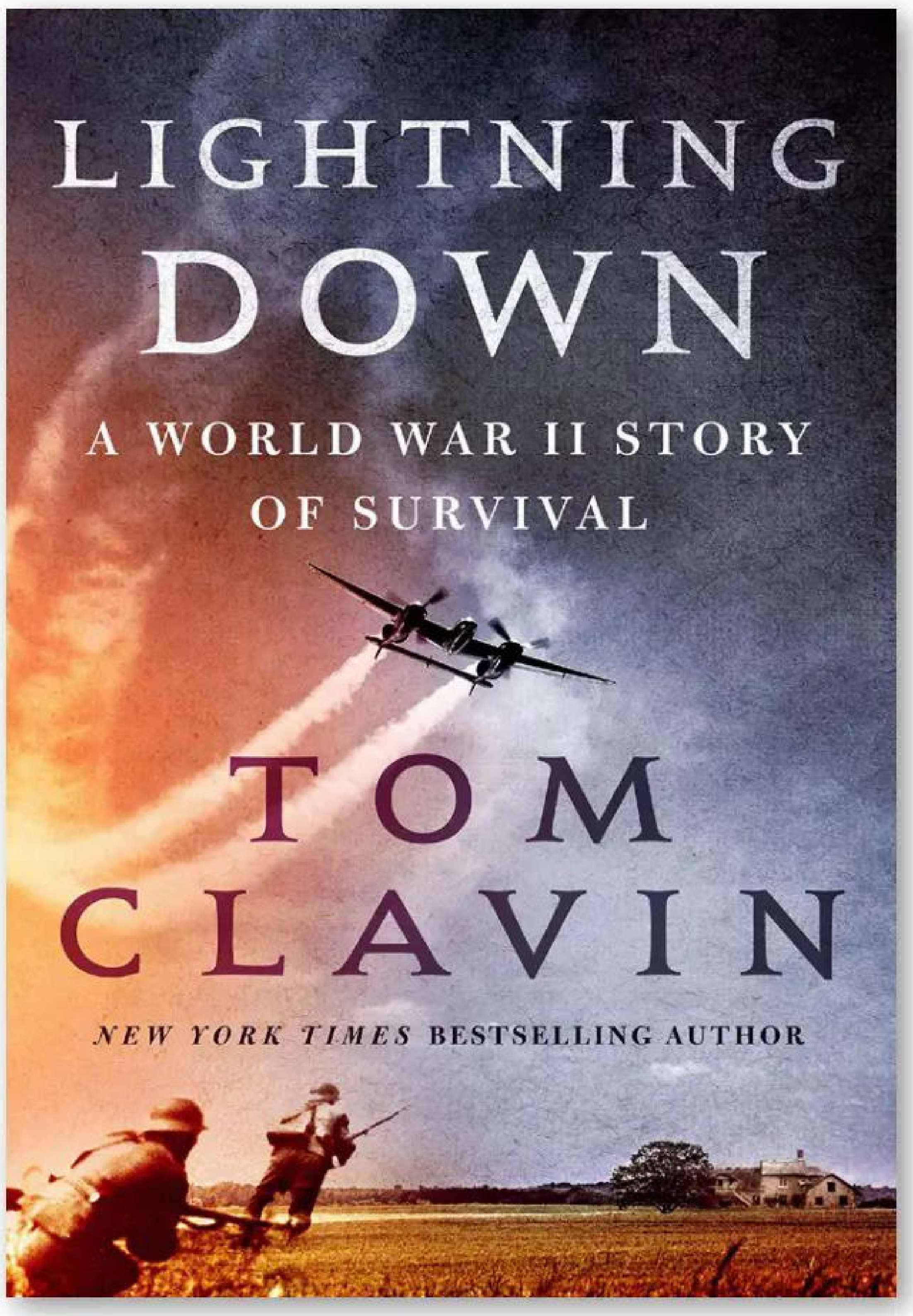
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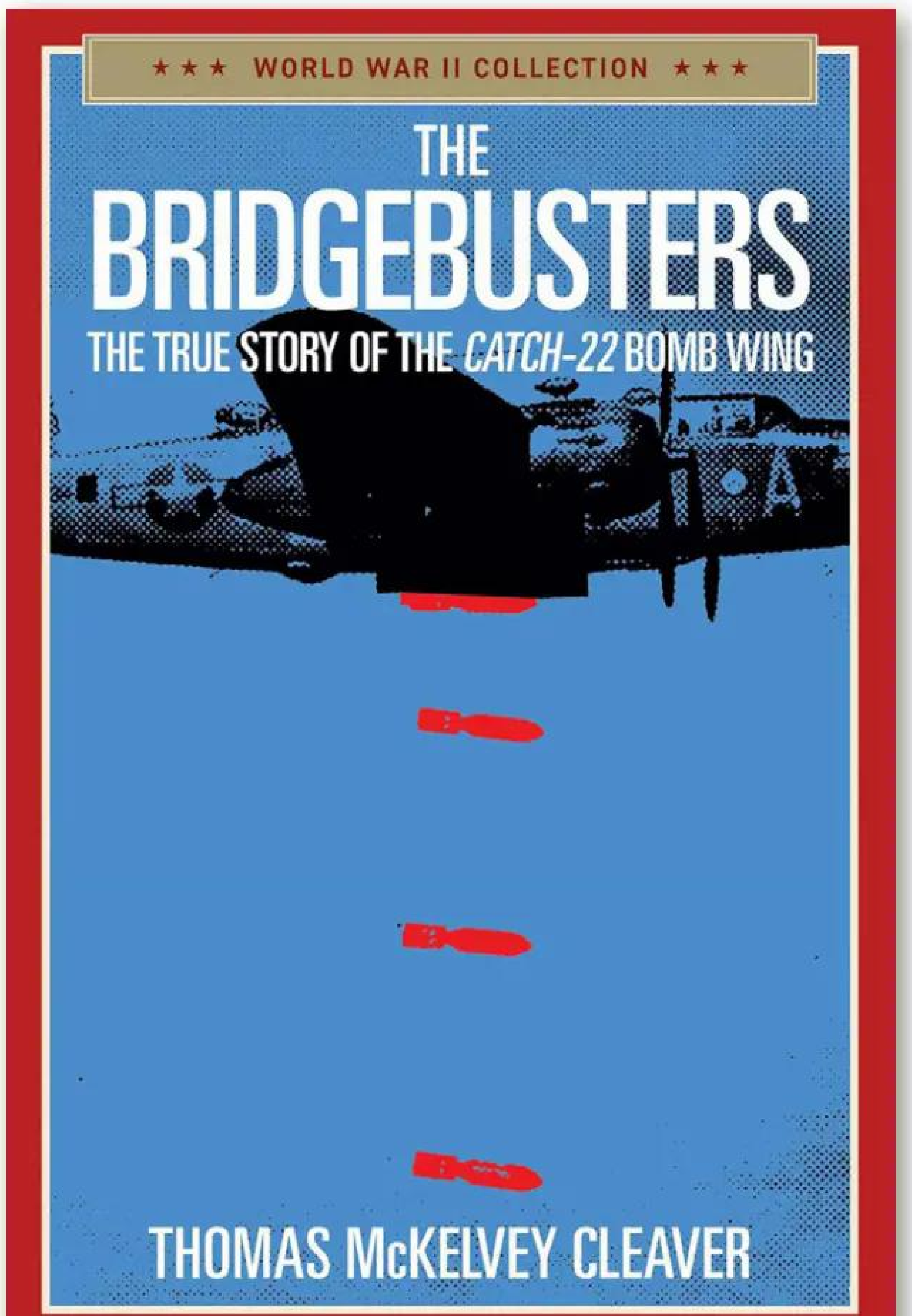
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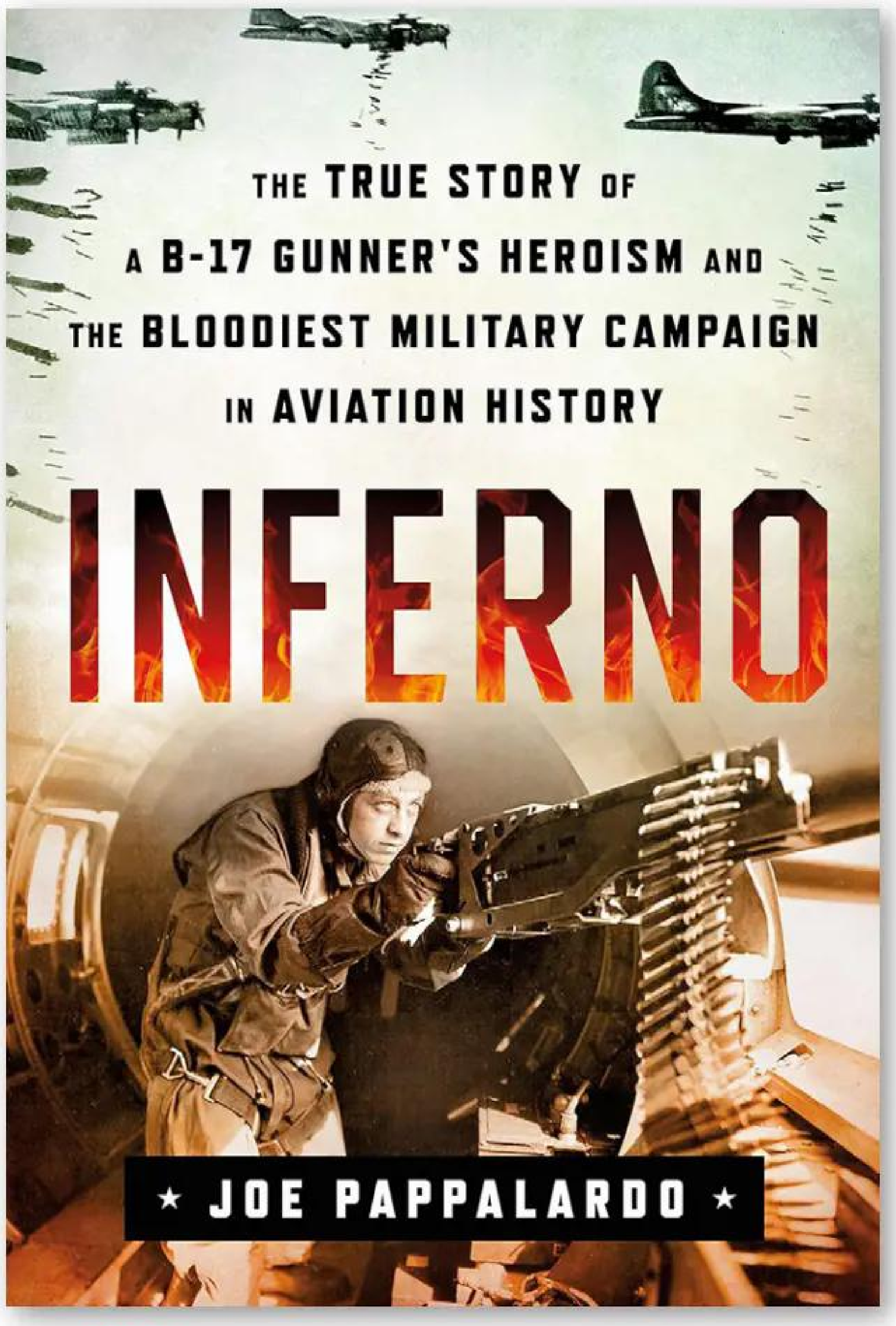
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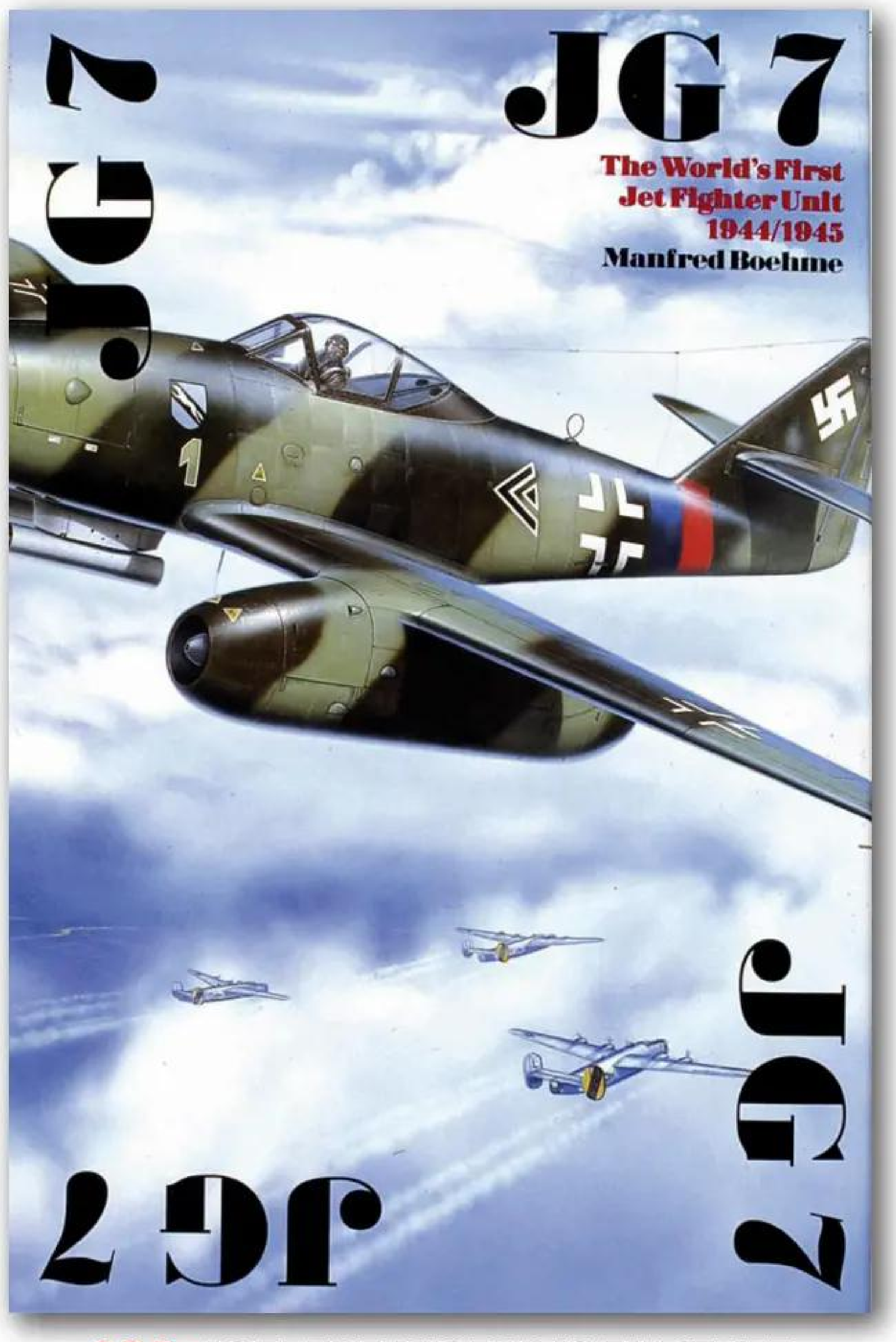
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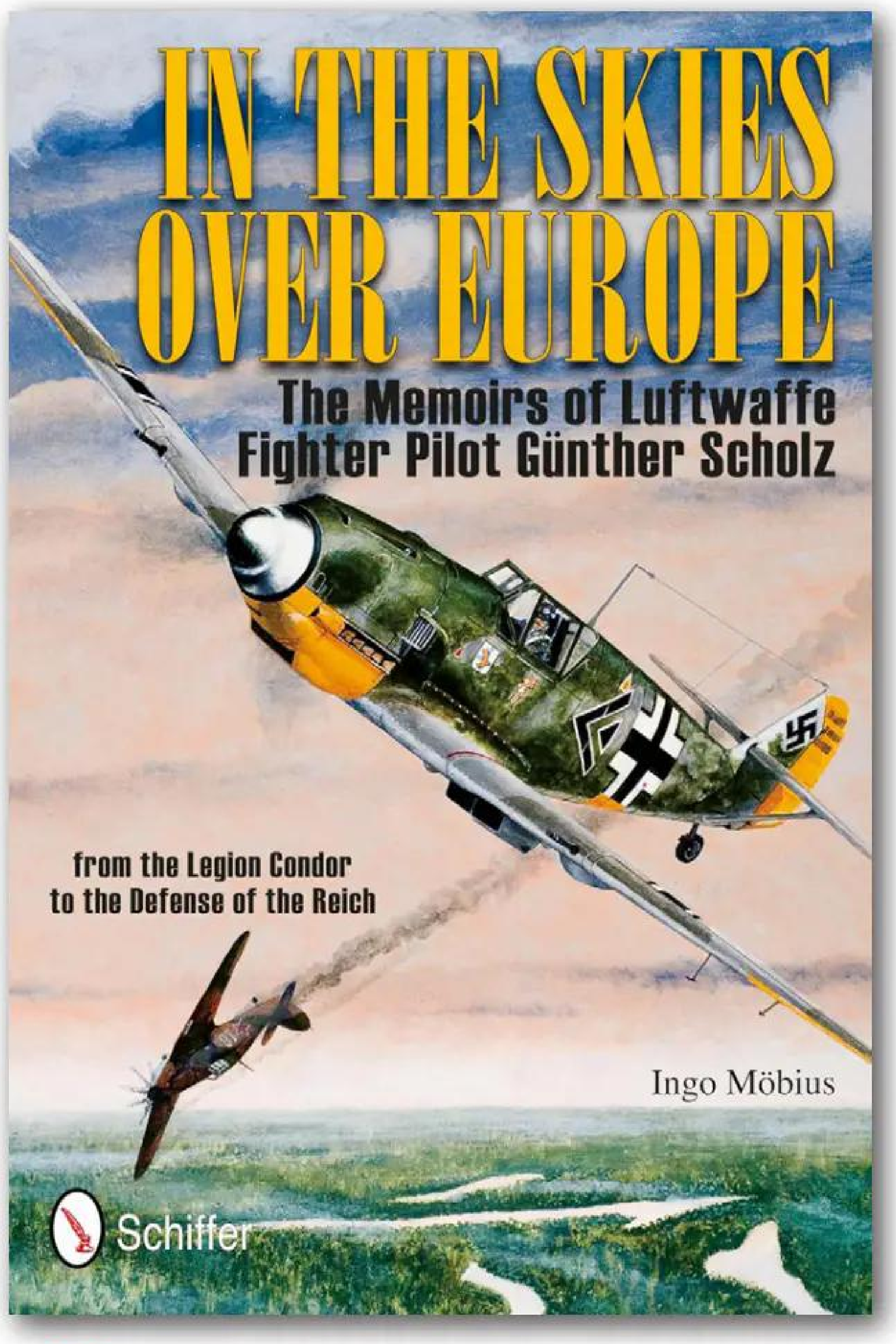
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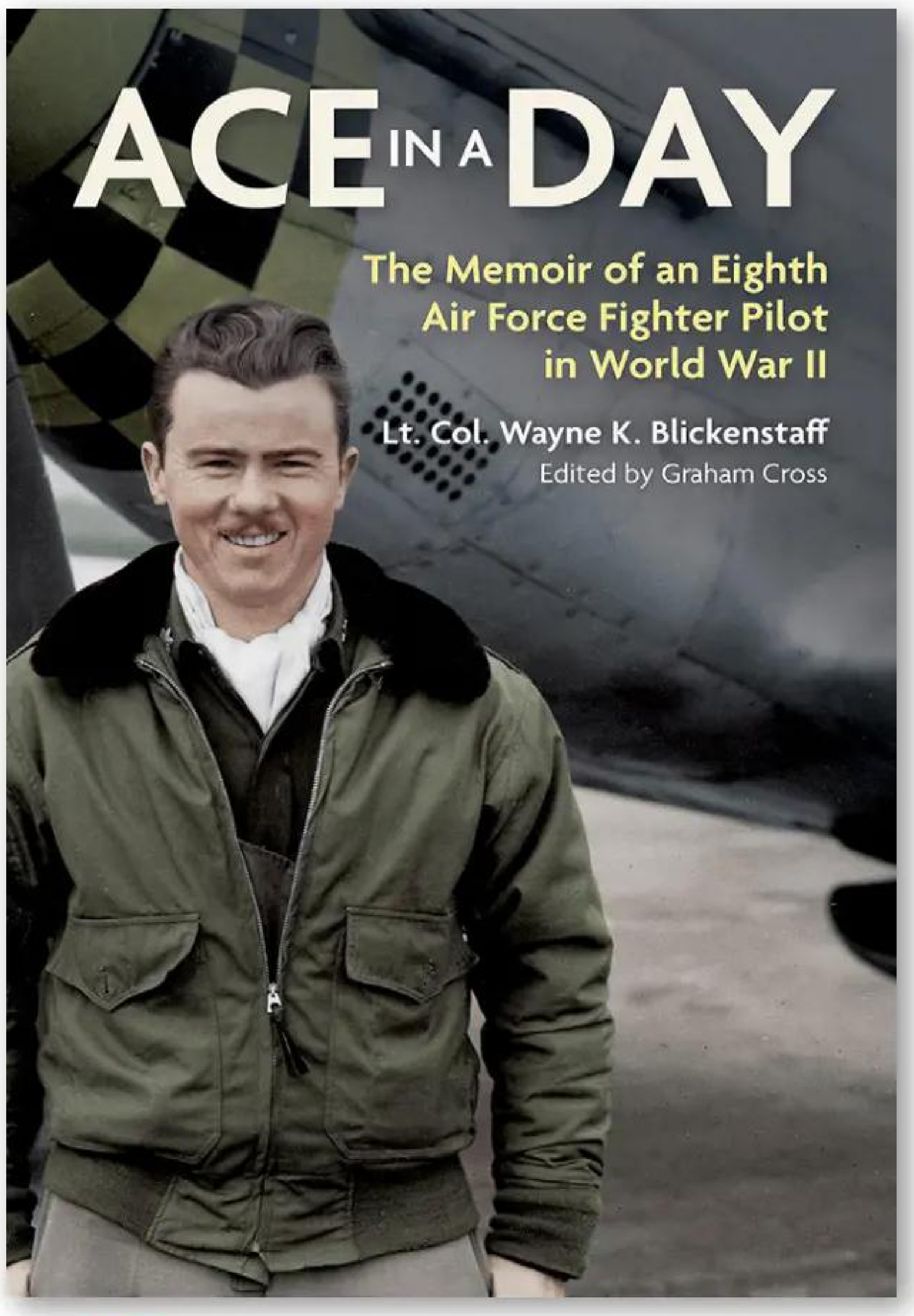
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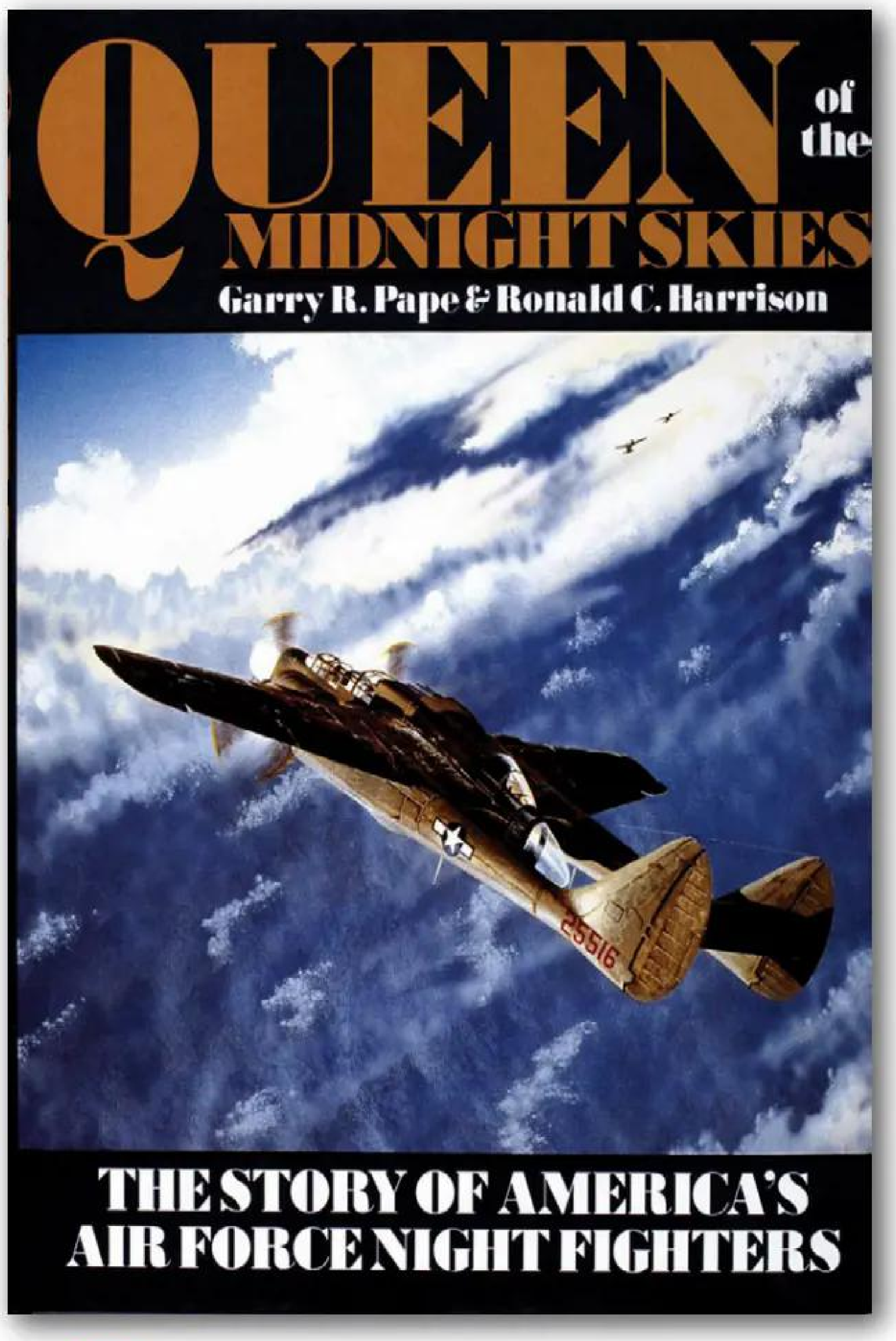
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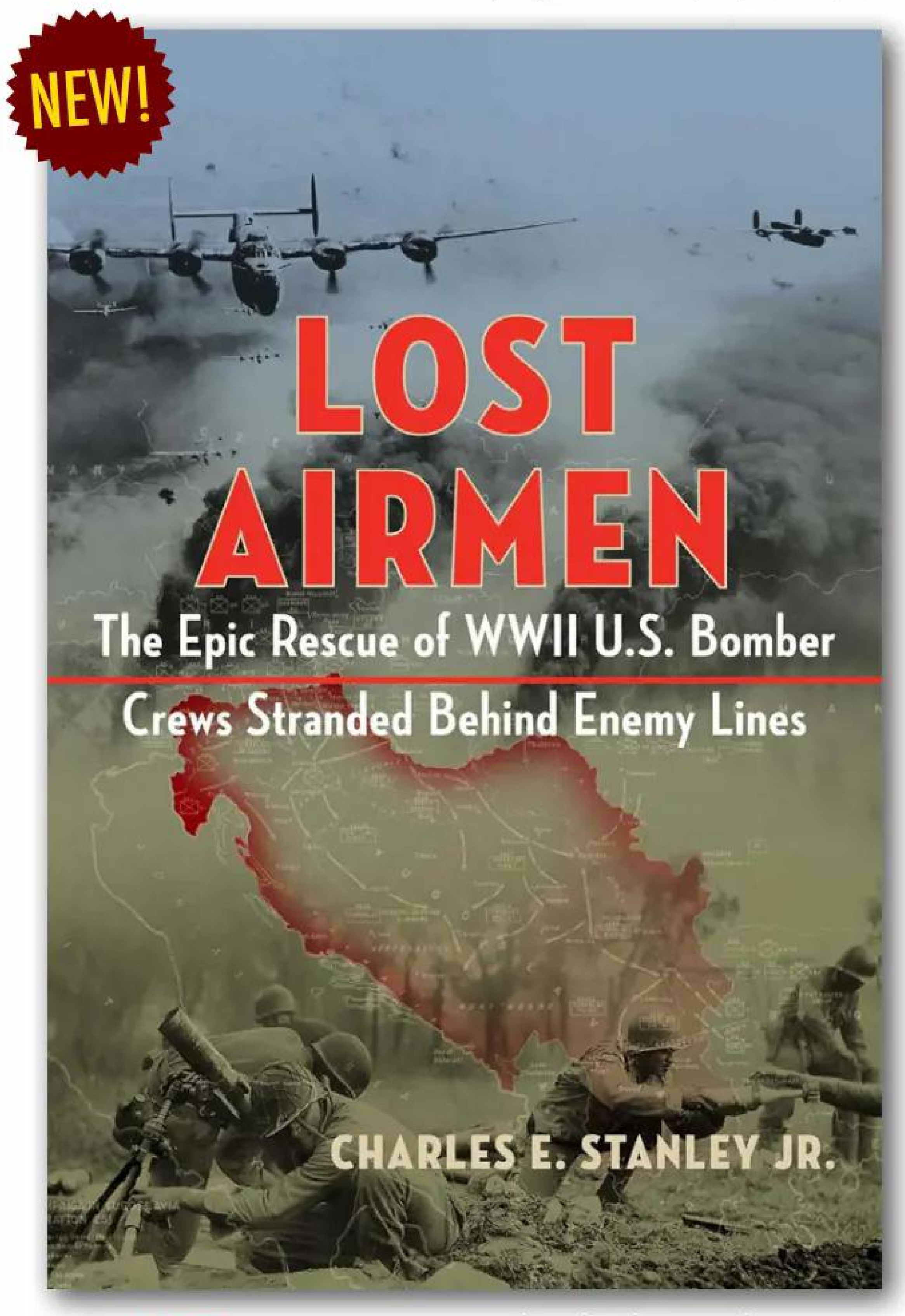
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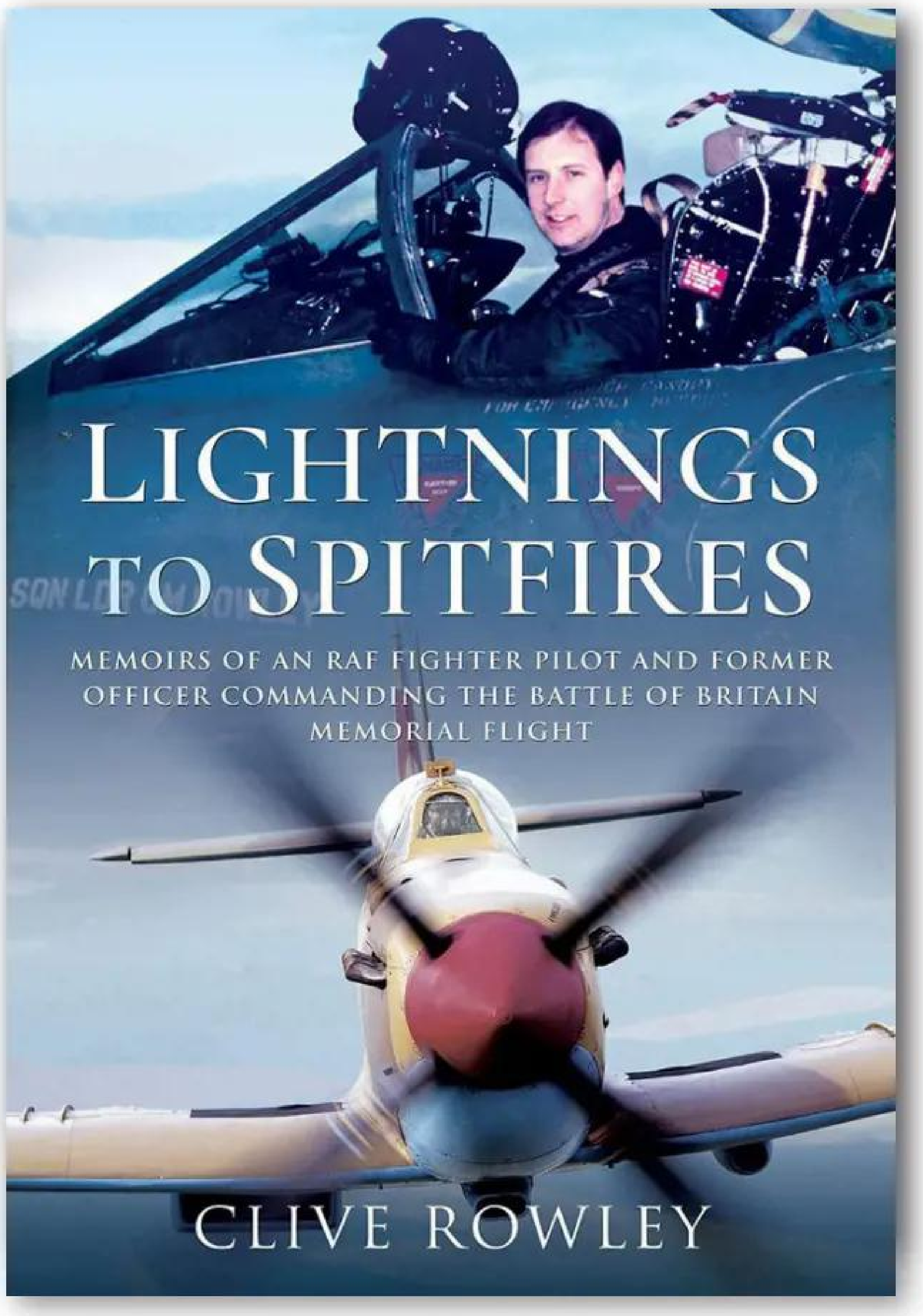
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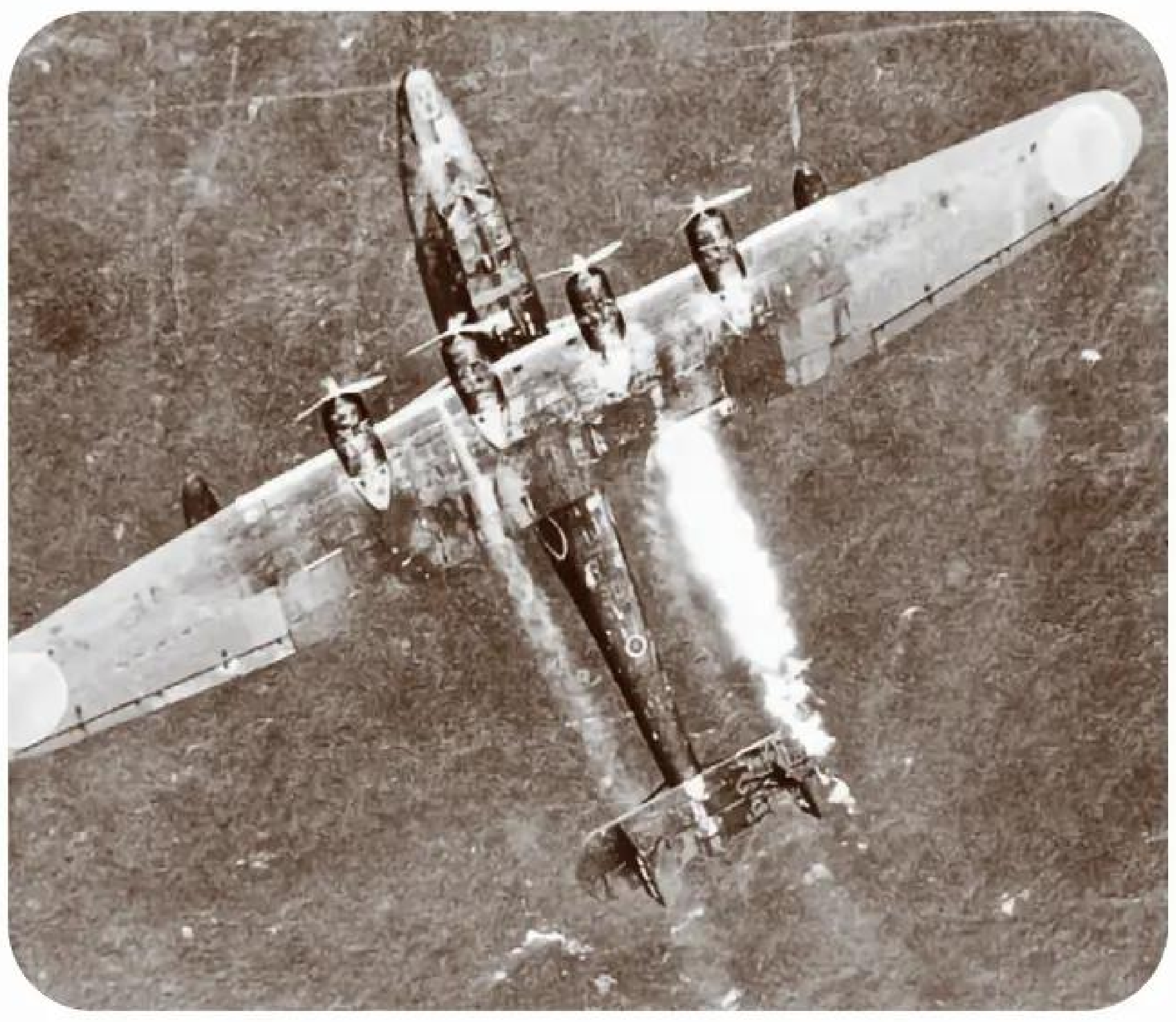

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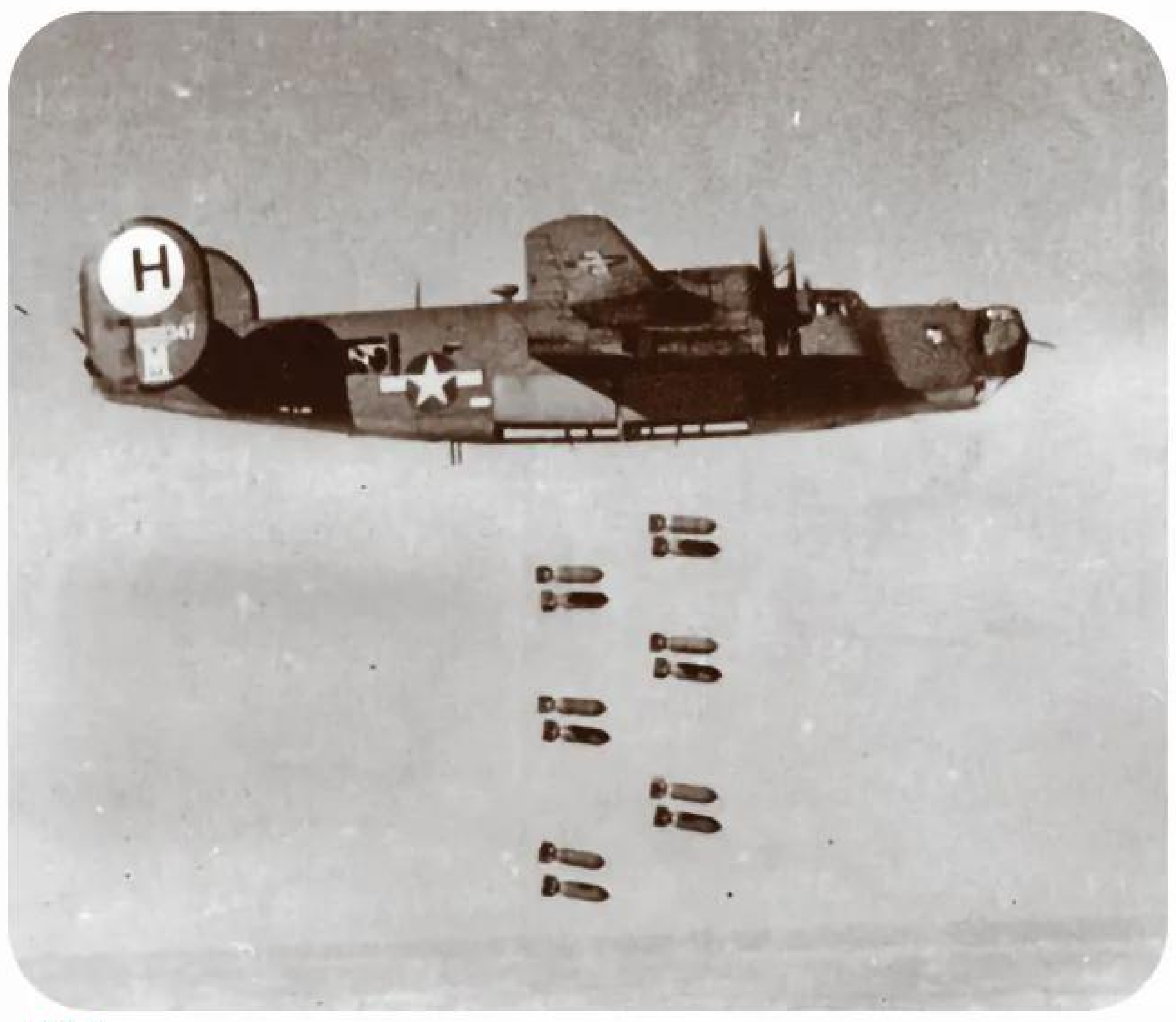

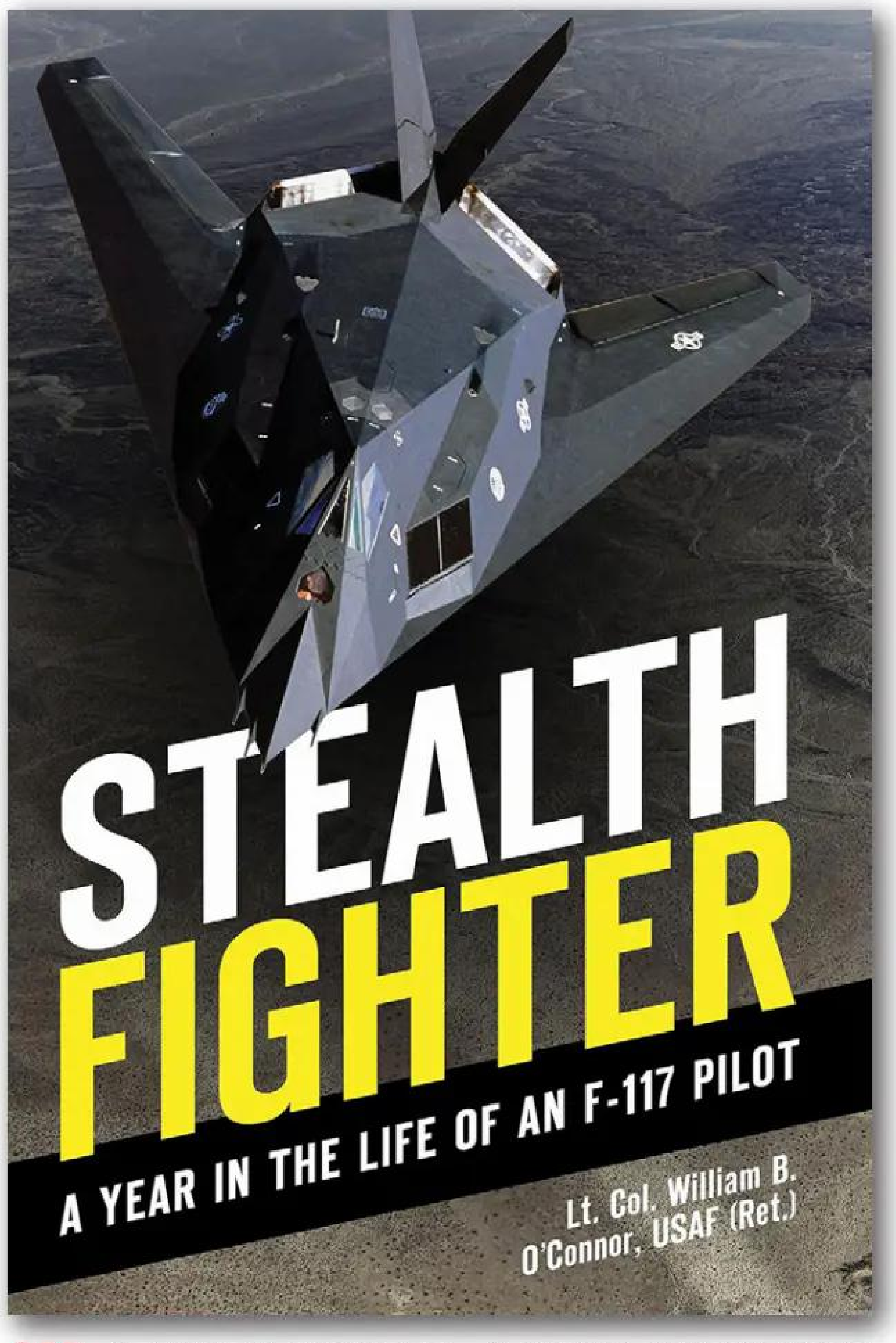
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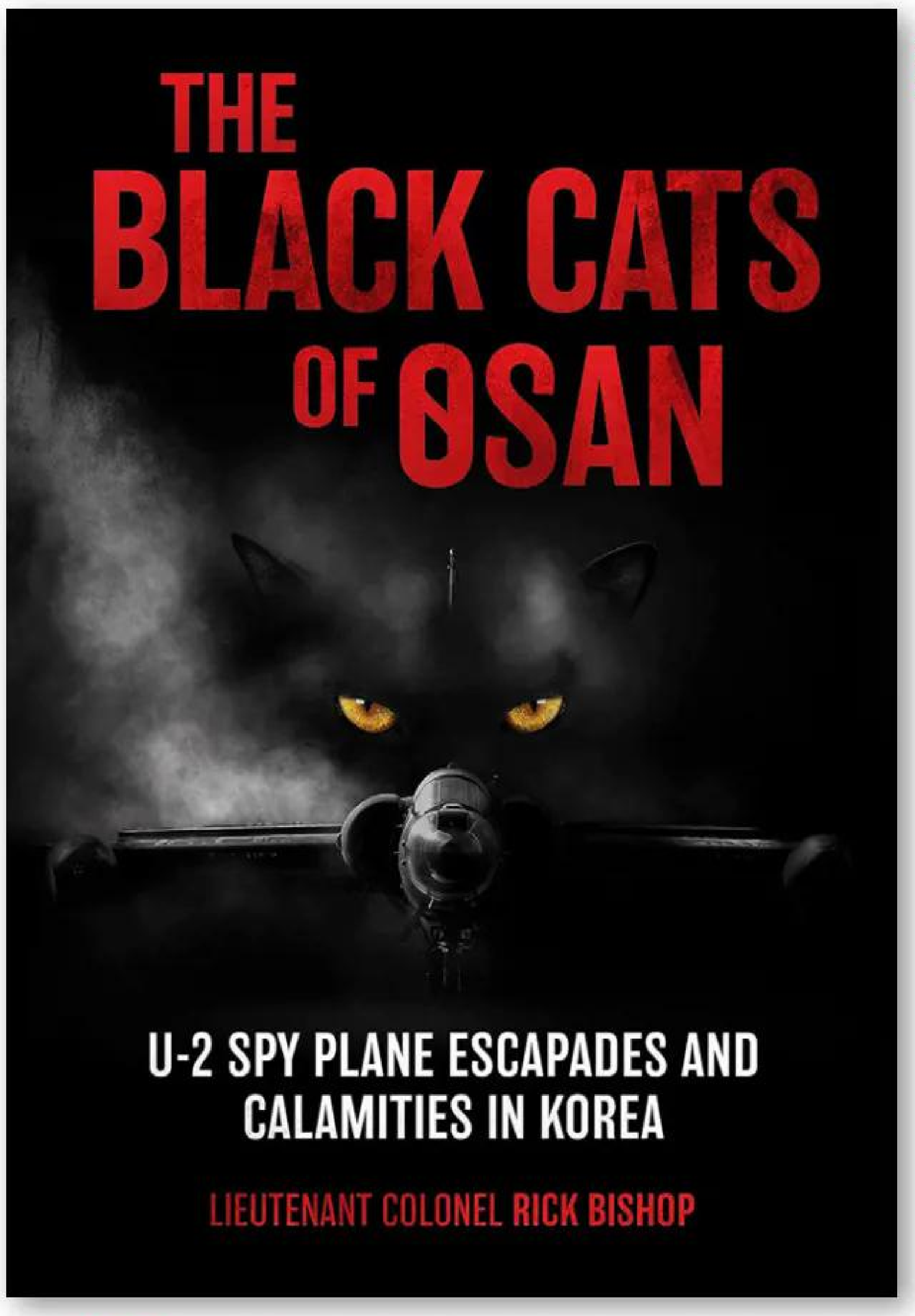
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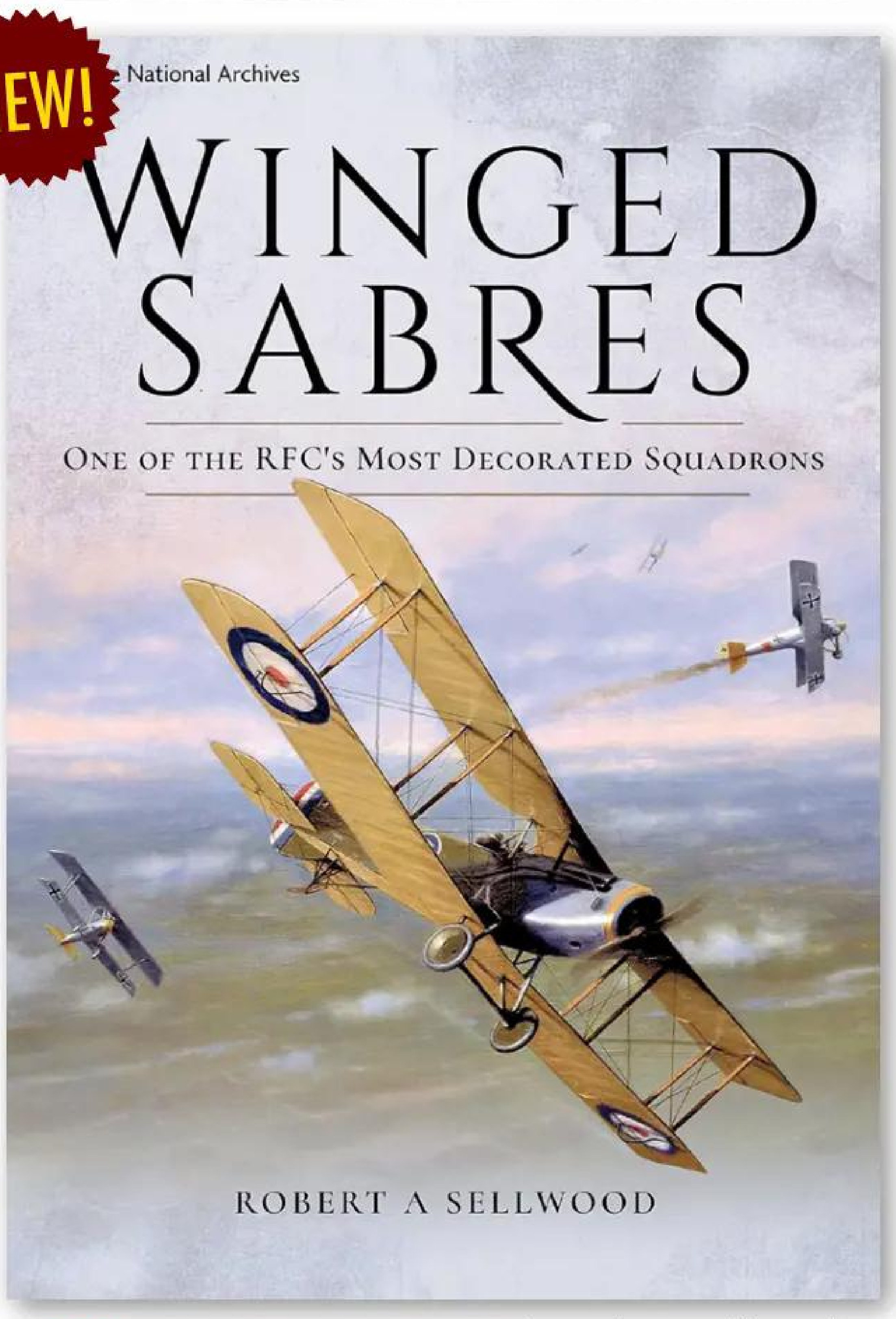
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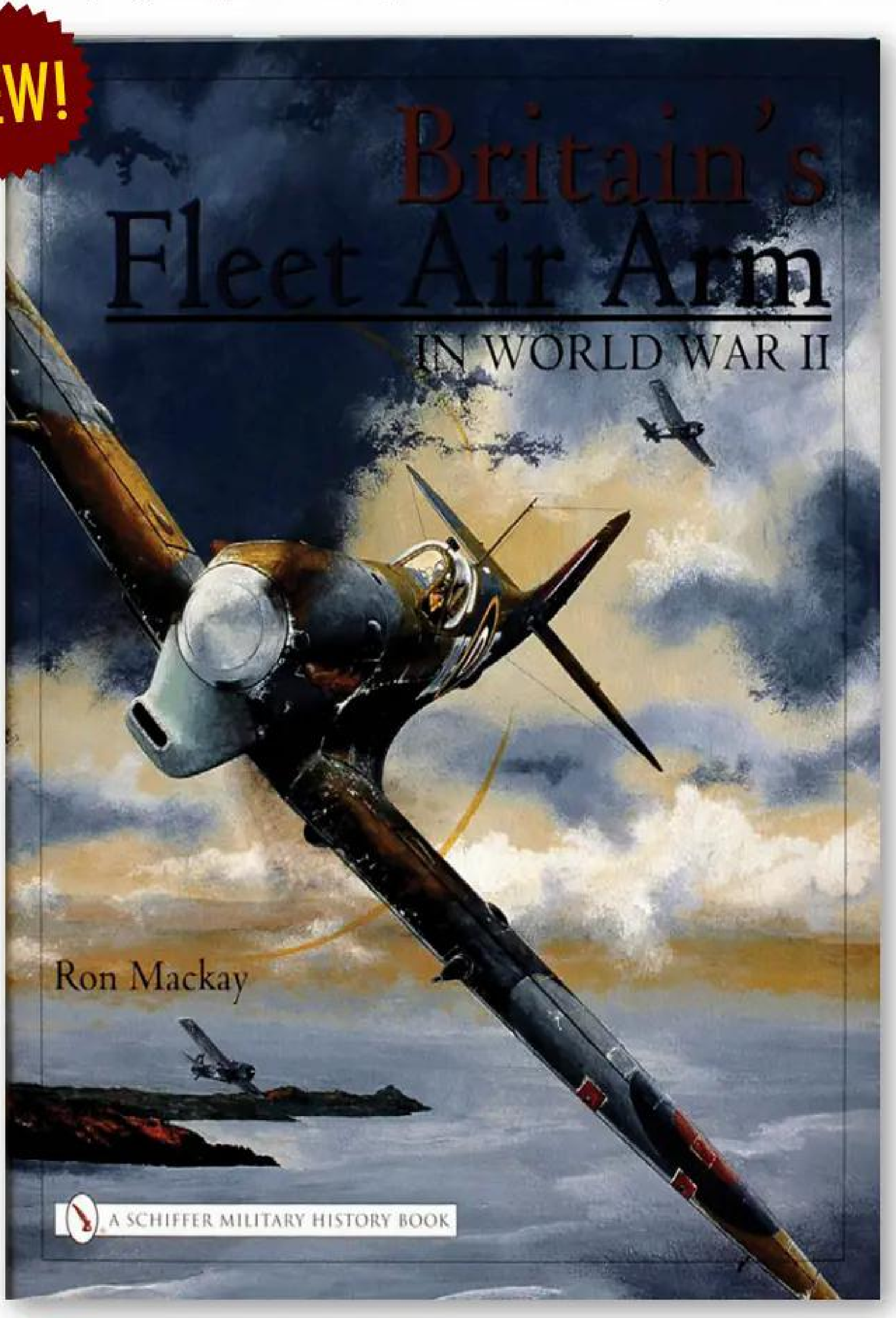
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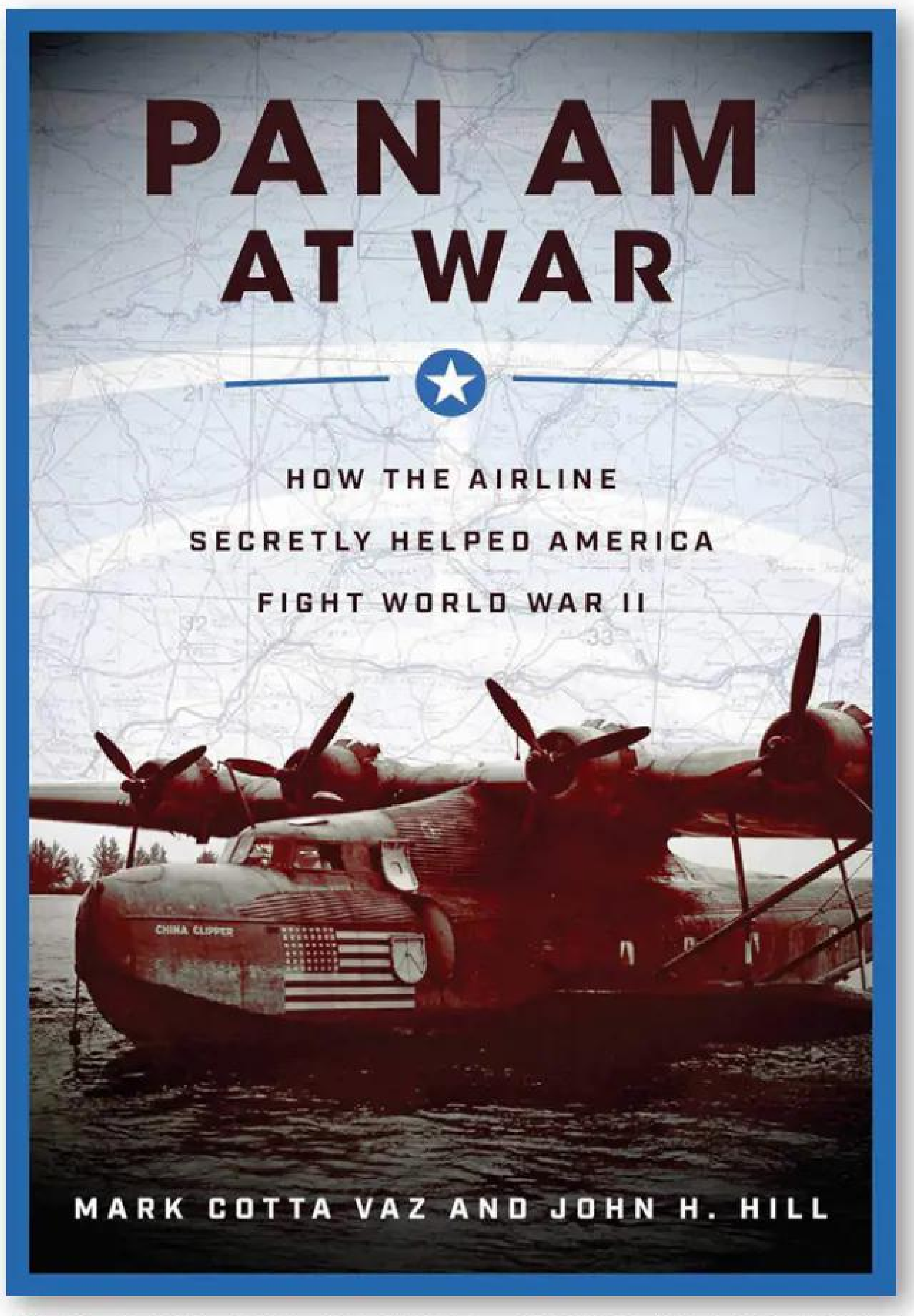
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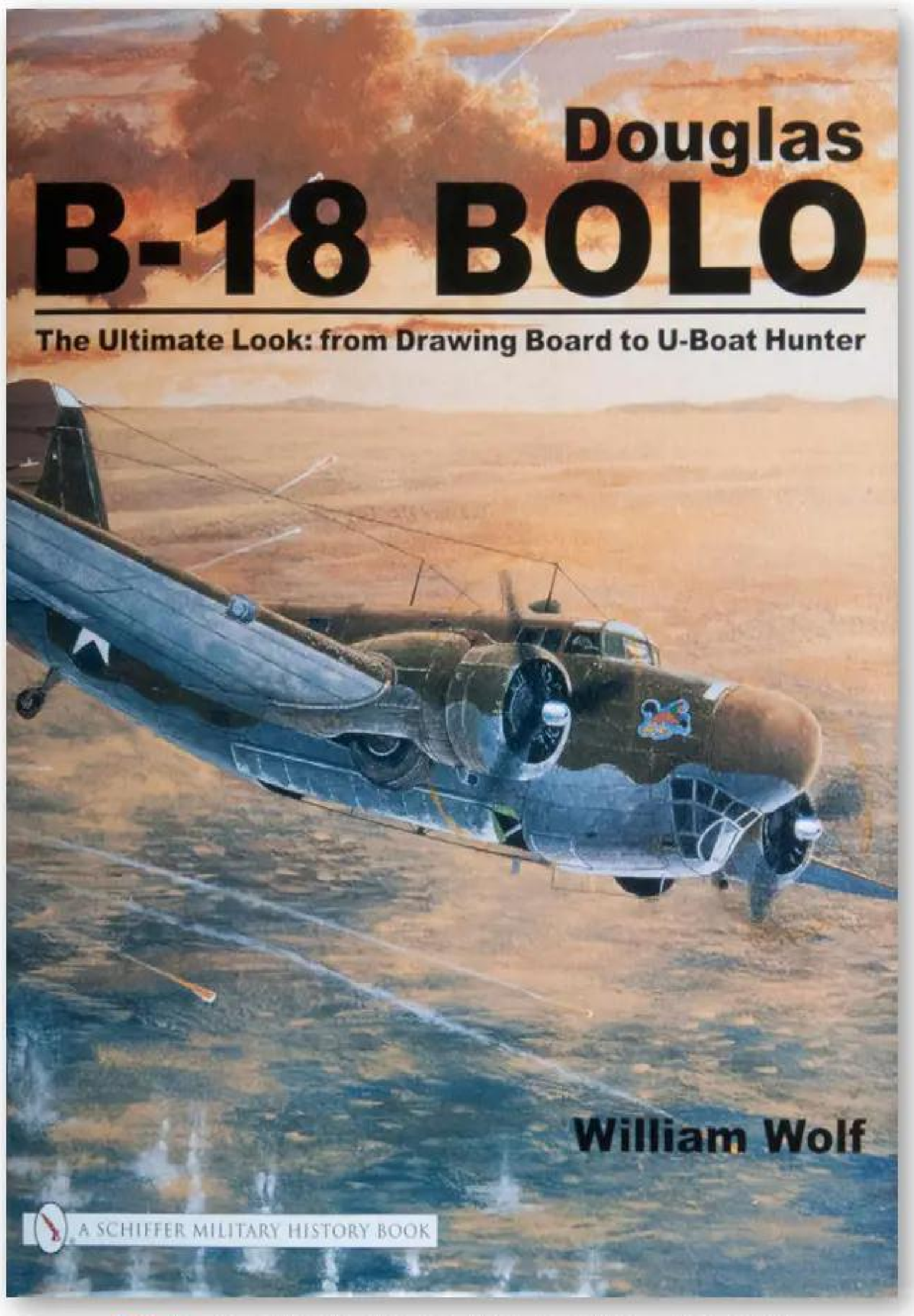
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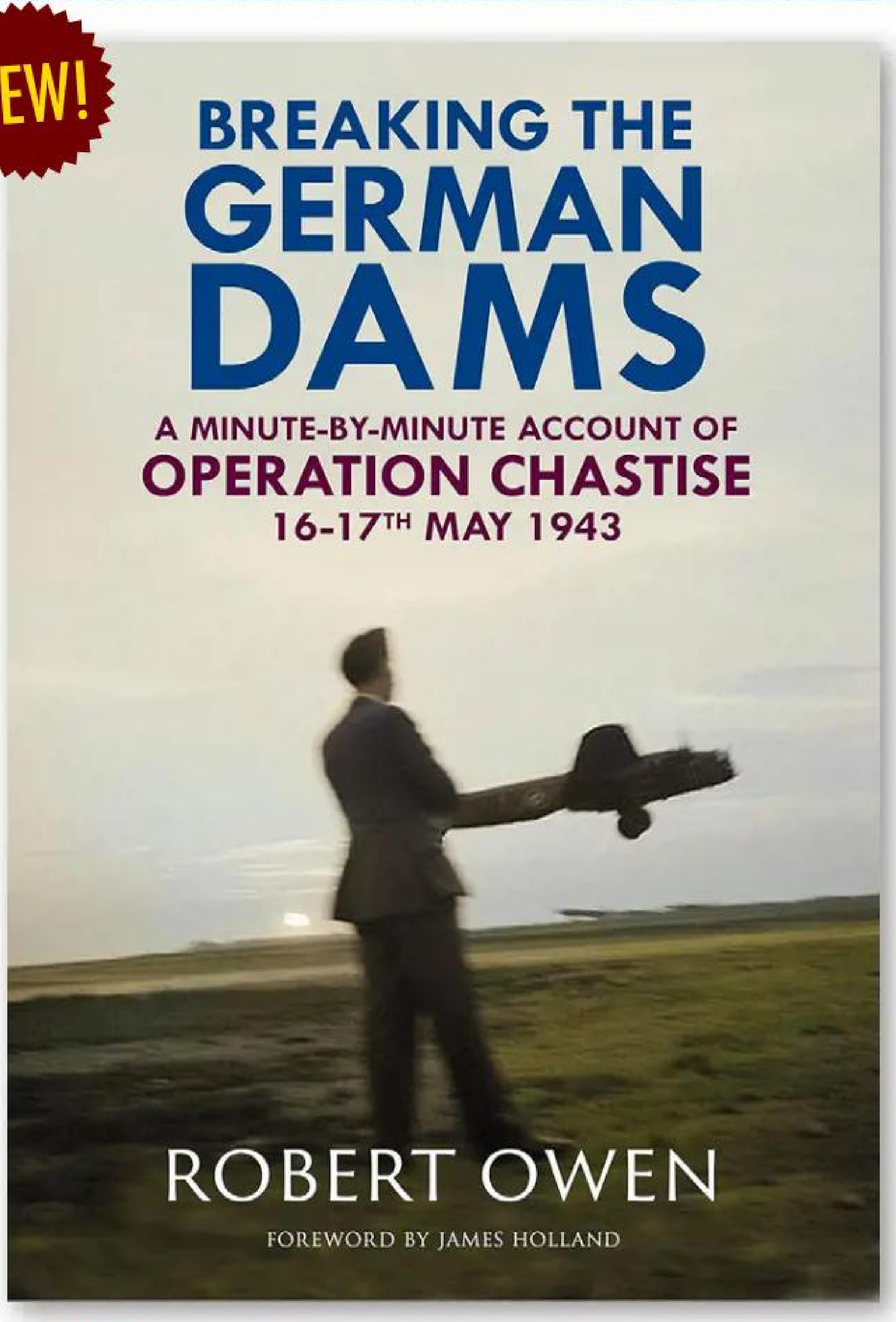
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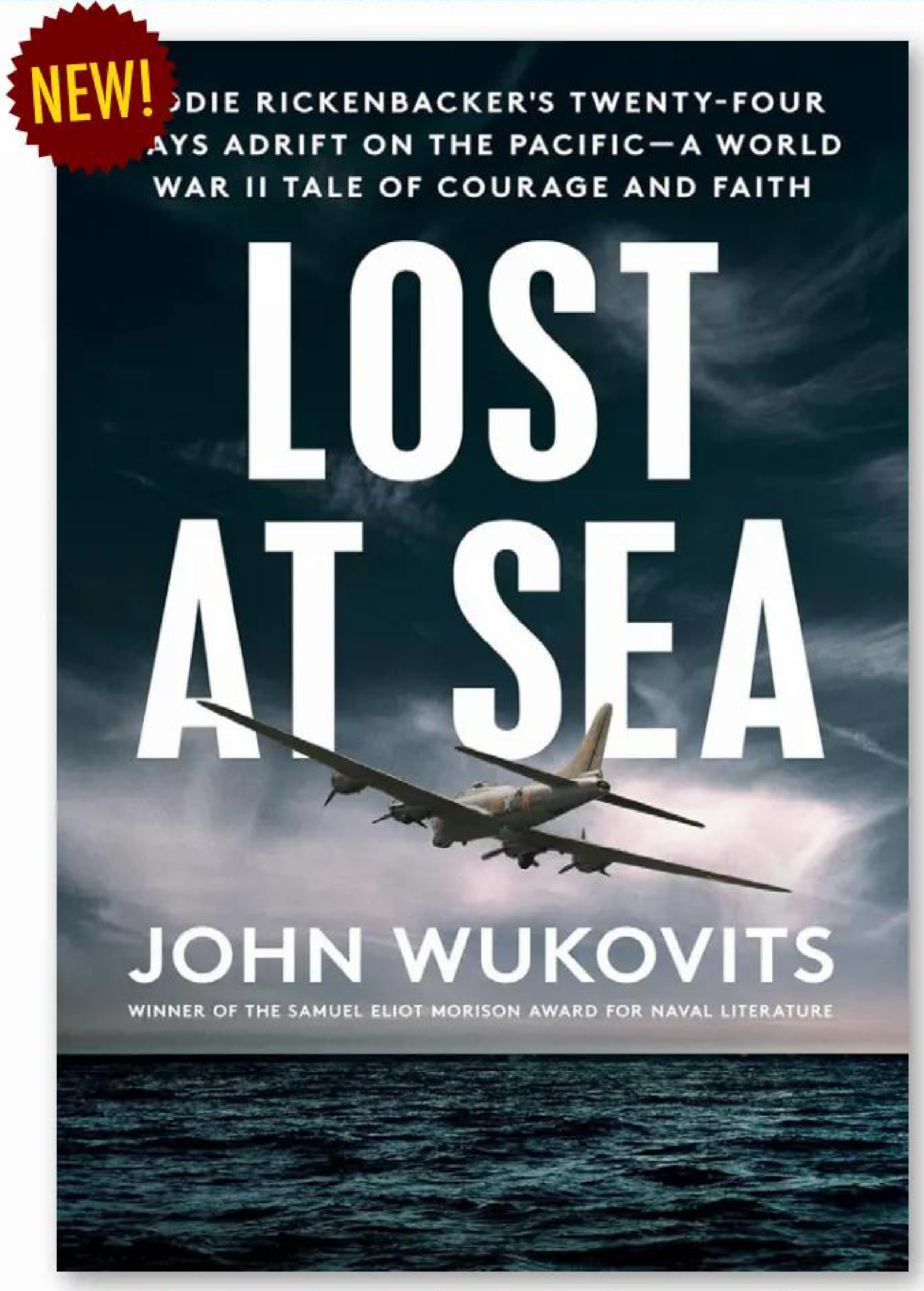
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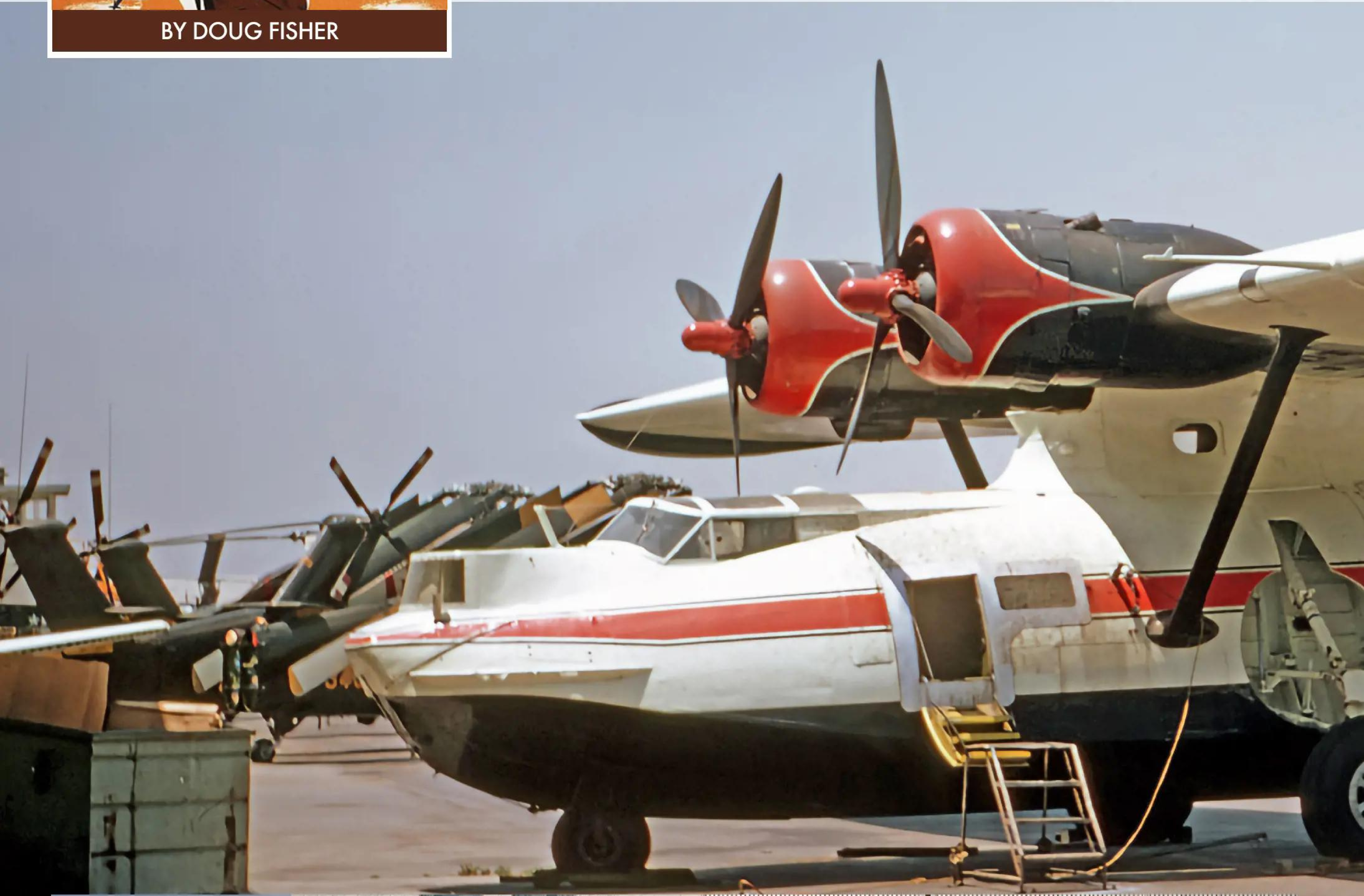
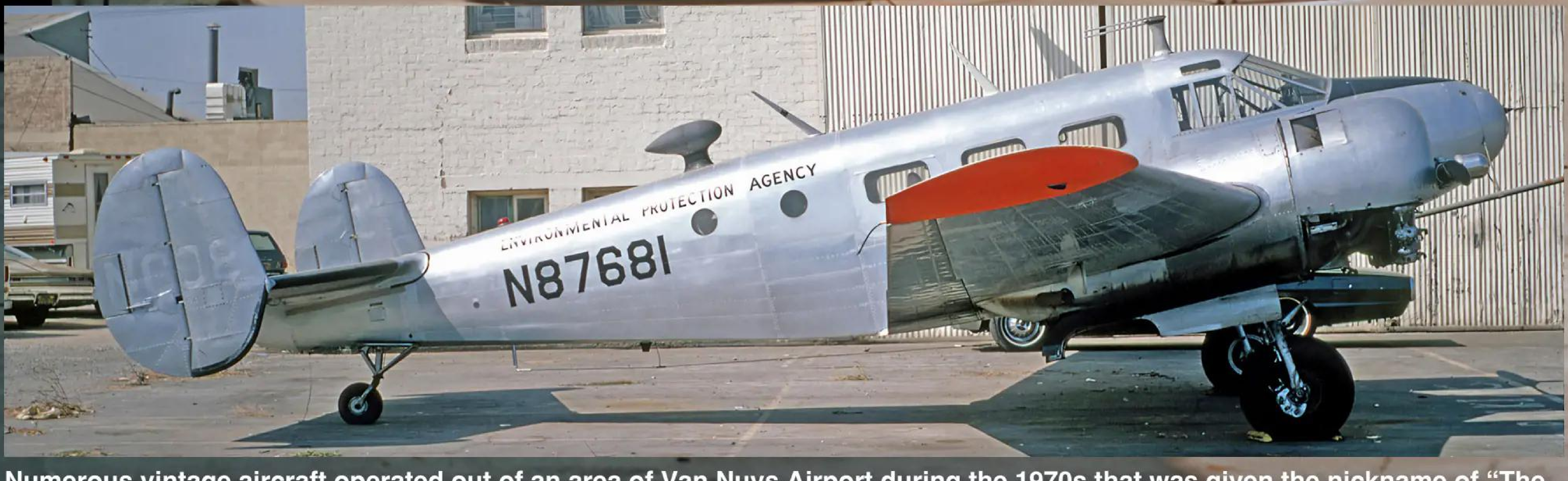
FRIDAY NIGHT OLDIES

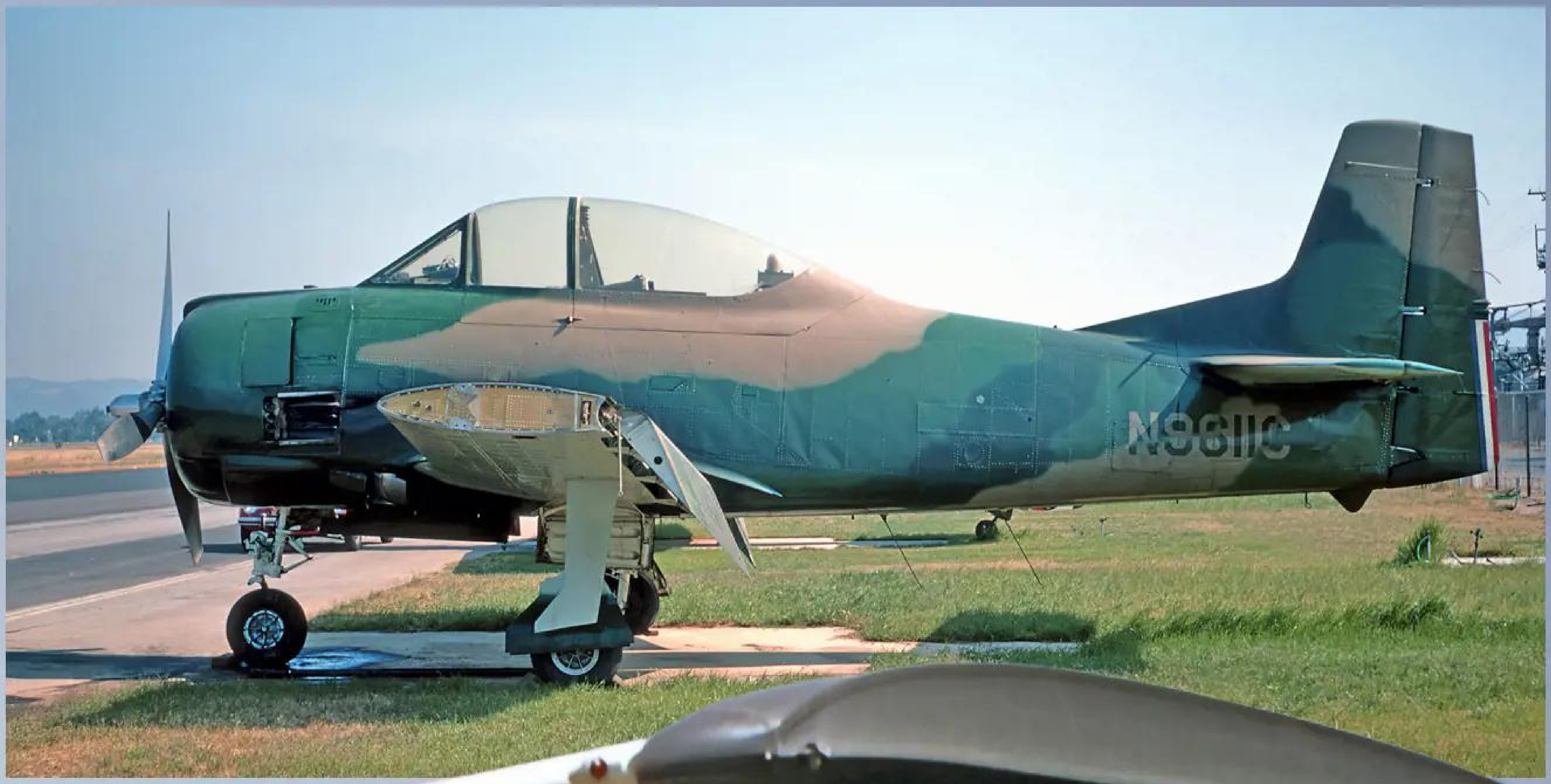
BY DOUG FISHER

The decade comprising the 1970s was a time of intense Warbird activity in the southern California area and virtually every airfield boasted a number of ex-military aircraft. Long Beach Airport was no exception and it was home to numerous Consolidated Catalinas including PBY-5A BuNo 34016/N5583V that was photographed on 10 May 1972. Finished in a pleasing civilian scheme, the aircraft was relatively stock and still retained most of its nose turret along with fuselage blisters. As can be seen, a door and extra window had been added on the forward fuselage. Note much is known about this aircraft but it was based at several southern California airfields during this time period. Things get a bit mysterious with this aircraft when it was reported as being scuttled on purpose in Mexico's Infernillo Reservoir on 19 March 1974. The plane was reportedly on a drug run. Over the years, there have been reports of various proposals to salvage the aircraft but it seems nothing has come of them.

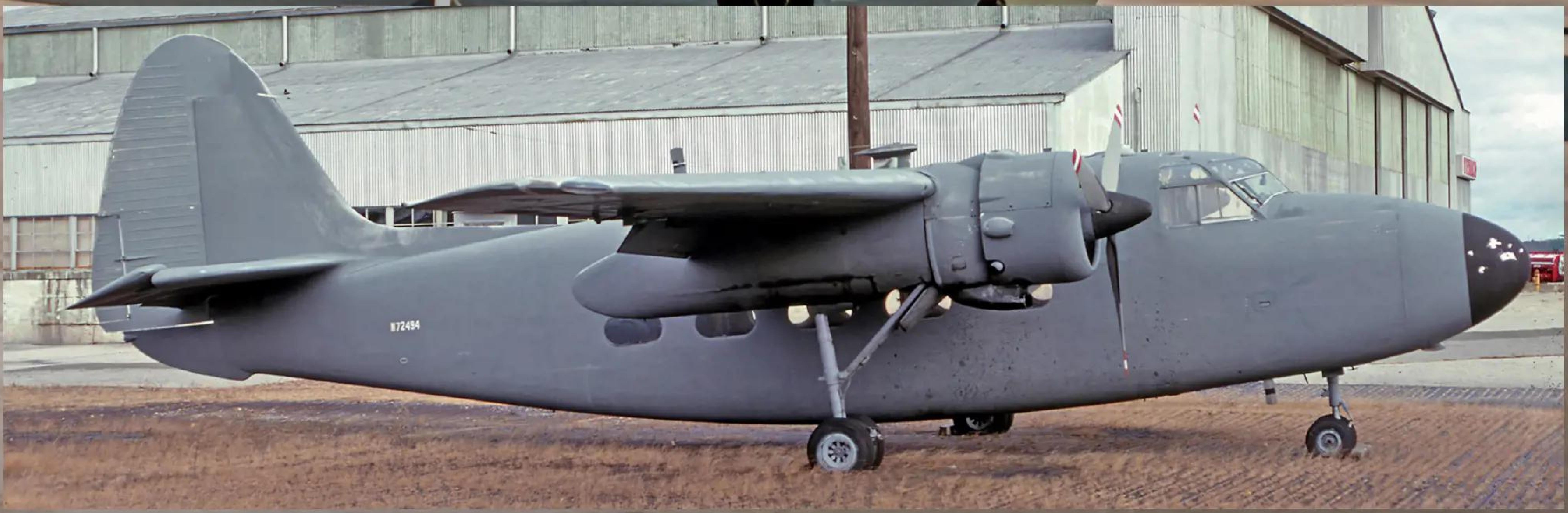




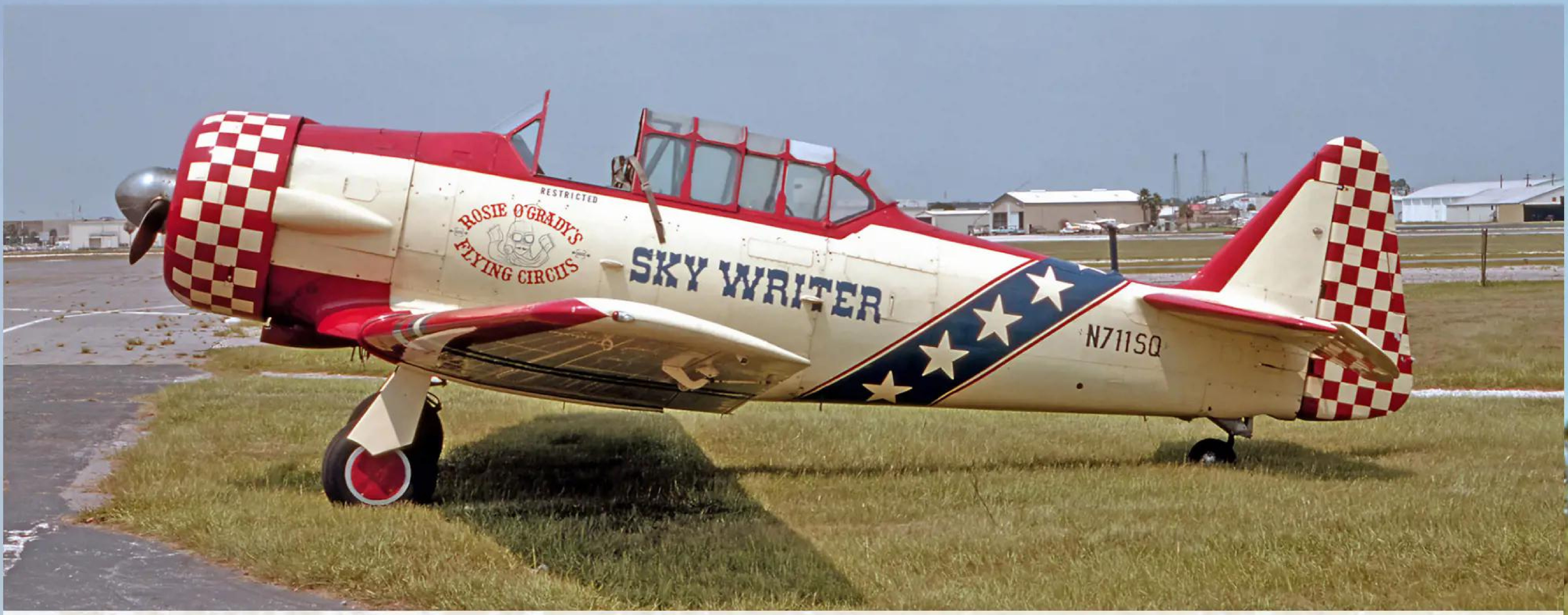
Numerous vintage aircraft operated out of an area of Van Nuys Airport during the 1970s that was given the nickname of "The Jungle." It was also one of the more historic portions of the airfield and many 1930s through 1950s movies were filmed in that location. The area, and its numerous historic hangars, have long been bulldozed but one of the company's operating from "The Jungle" was Volpar — know for their many conversions to the Beech Model 18. This interesting ex-USAF C-45G 51-11897/N87681 was at Volpar for work on 9 May 1971. After USAF service, the aircraft went through several governmental agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency and it is seen with various air sampling modifications. The plane is now on display at the Castle Air Museum in central California.



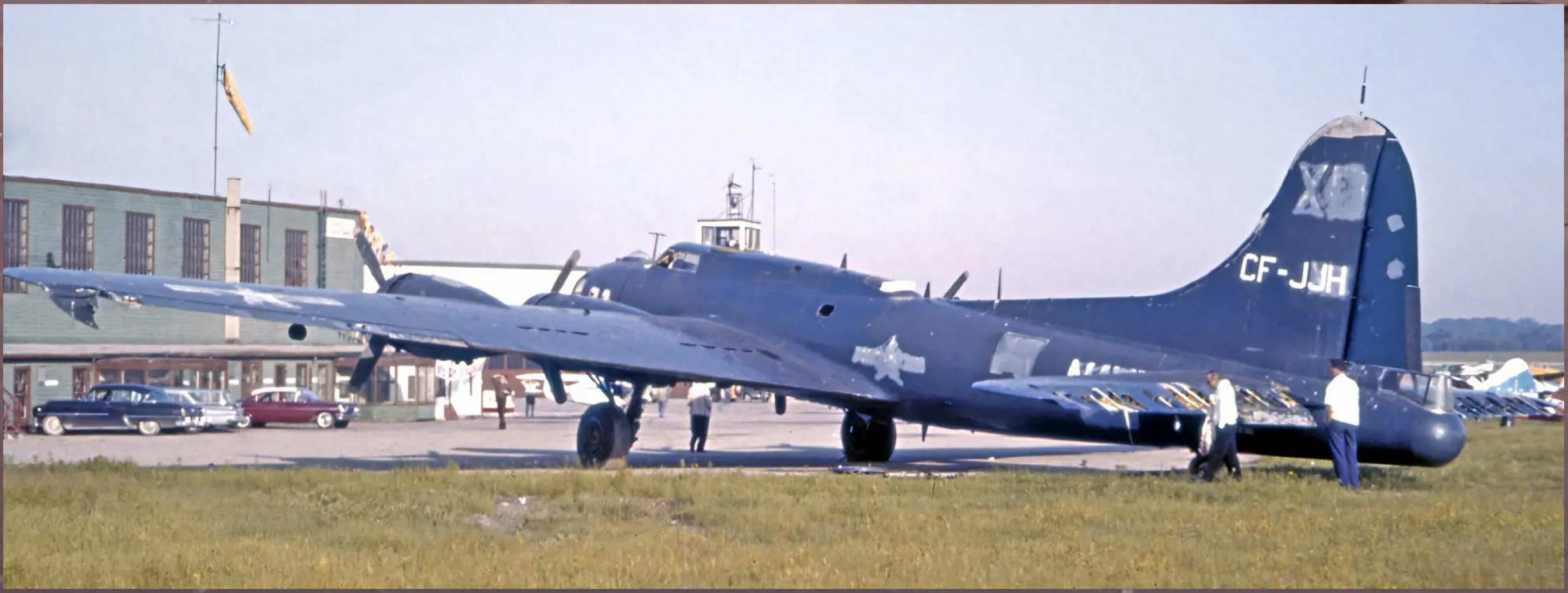
During the 1970s, numerous Warbirds were based at Van Nuys Airport and one of those was Don "Muldoon" Alderson's camouflaged North American T-28A Trojan USAF 49-1673/N9611C. Don was well-known in the car and air racing industry and his need for speed was exemplified with his T-28. After a taxiing accident, he replaced the 800-hp engine with a 1625-hp Wright radial that turned the plane into a real screamer. Wearing its unusual camouflage scheme, Don and the T-28 were often seen in formation with many of the Mustangs then based at the field. He sold the aircraft in the early 1970s and it eventually went to the Confederate Air Force where it was destroyed in a crash on 9 May 1987 at Tatum, New Mexico, that killed the pilot and passenger.



One of the odder Warbirds to be imported into the USA was the Percival Pembroke. Ten of twelve Pembroke C.51s operated by the Belgium Air Force were purchased by Air America Inc. and imported. This outfit was a fairly brazen collection of drug runners and the Pembrokes were immediately put to work in illegal activities. Several were destroyed and others impounded. Some ex-Royal Air Force aircraft also received US civil registrations and one of those was WV741/N72494, seen here in an overall gray paint scheme.

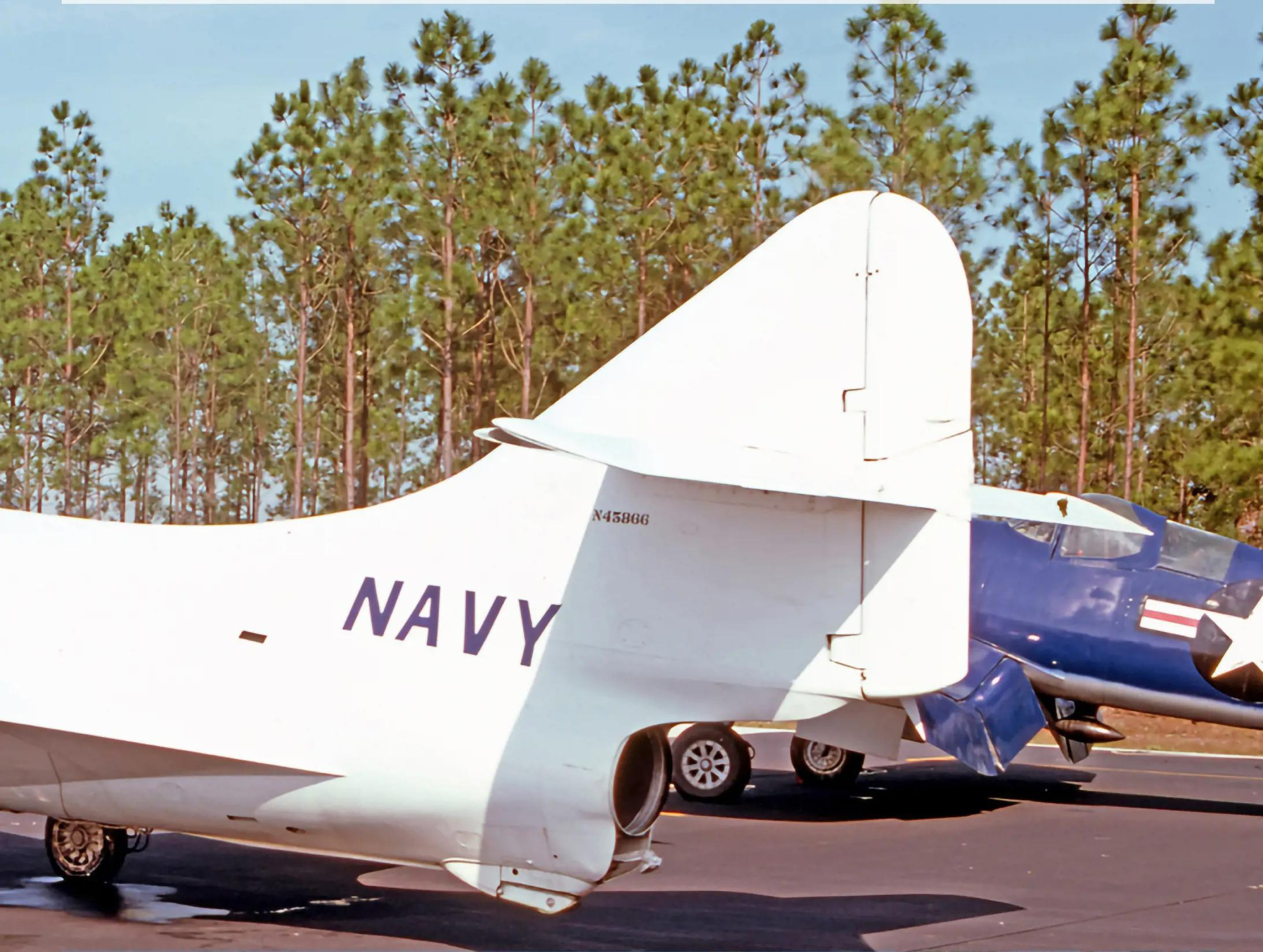


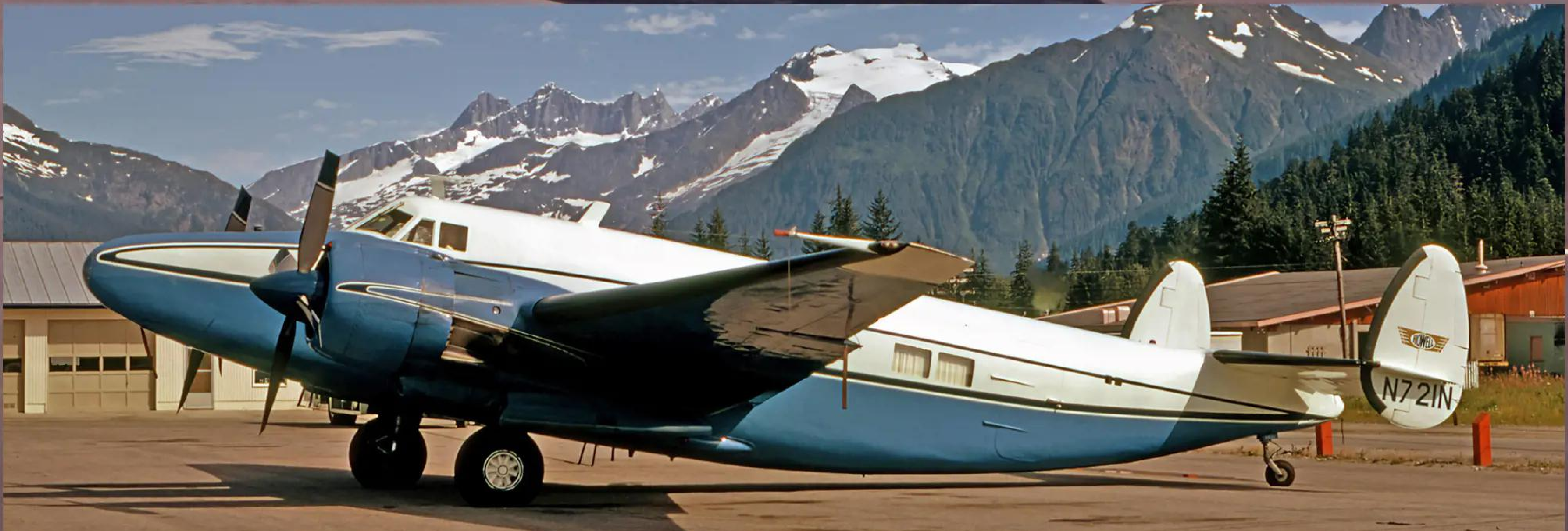
North American SNJ-4 Texan N711SQ at Orlando, Florida, shortly before it was destroyed in a mid-air collision with Cessna 340A N8716K on 1 May 1987. Three on the Cessna were killed along with the pilot of the T-6, which operated as a skywriter with Rosie O'Grady's Flying Circus. Both aircraft were under radar control and the NTSB faulted the controllers for the collision.



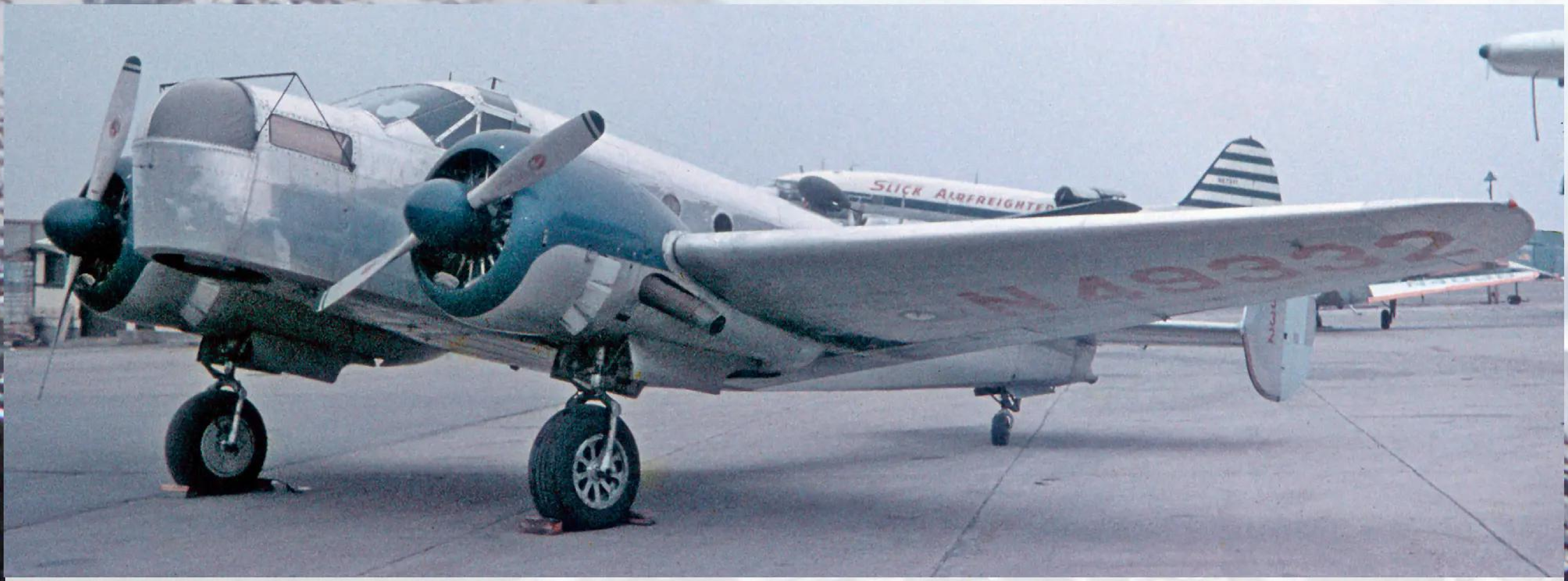
With its control surface fabric in tatters, Boeing PB-1W (ex-B-17G 44-83873) BuNo 77236/CF-JJH makes for a sad sight at Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, during 1958. As can be seen, the plane was in relatively good condition and it had been purchased by Kenting Aviation for conversion to aerial survey work. This did not take place and the Fort was scrapped in 1962 after its engines and other parts were removed.

One of the rarest Jet Warbirds of the 1970s was the Grumman Panther and two of these extremely historic aircraft were briefly flown on the American civil registration. F9F-2B BuNo 123078/N45866 was photographed after its arrival in Florida when it was owned by Isaac Newton "Junior" Burchinal. After Junior went to jail on drug running charges, the Panther was acquired in 1992 by the Cavanaugh Flight Museum at Addison, Texas. The plane underwent a 25,000-man-hour restoration that saw it put into the colors and markings of VF-721 "Starbusters." However, due to its rarity the museum decided to keep the plane on the ground. When the museum closed its Addison facility, the Panther and many other aircraft were moved to North Texas Regional Airport but are not currently on public display.

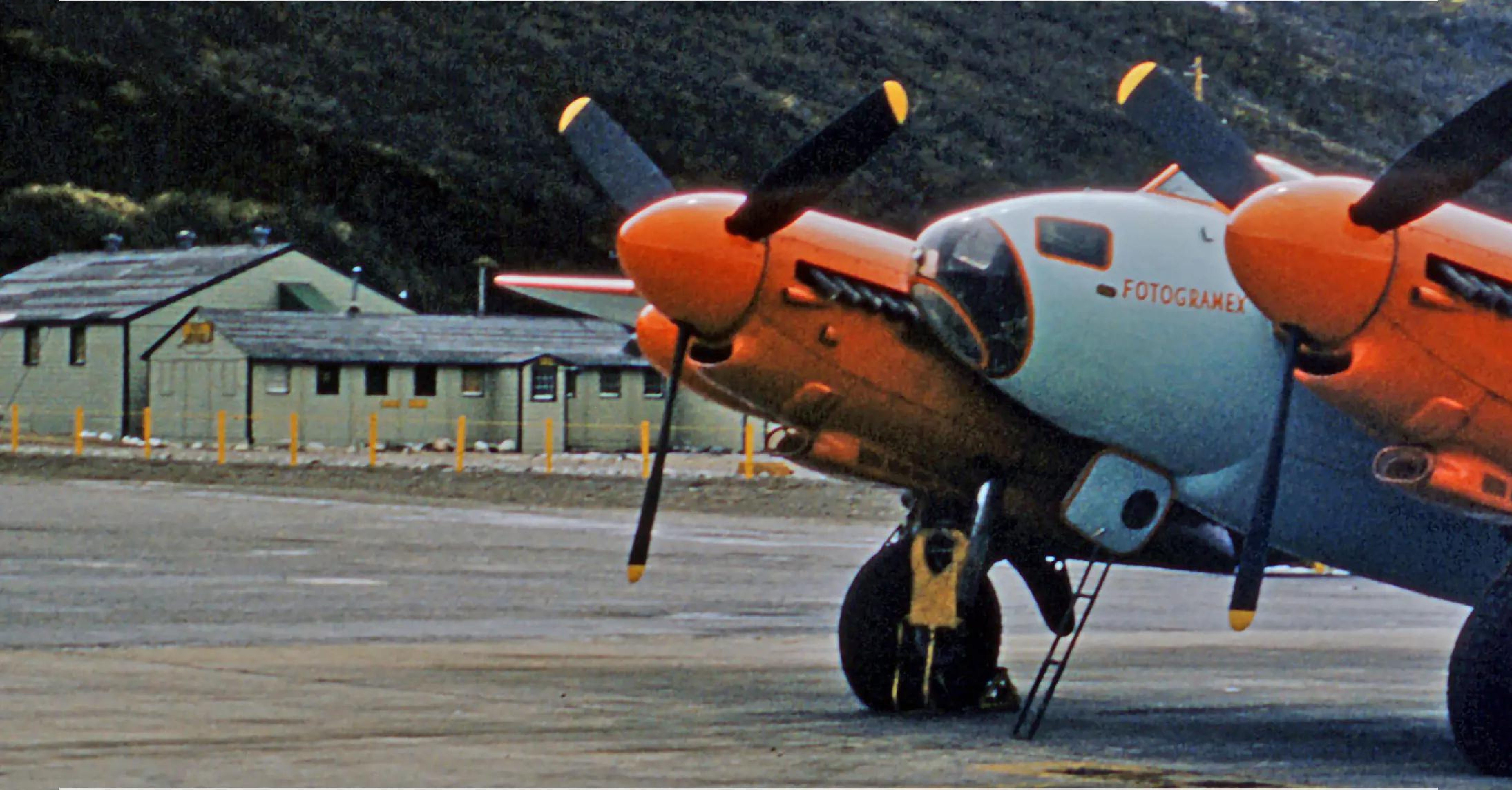




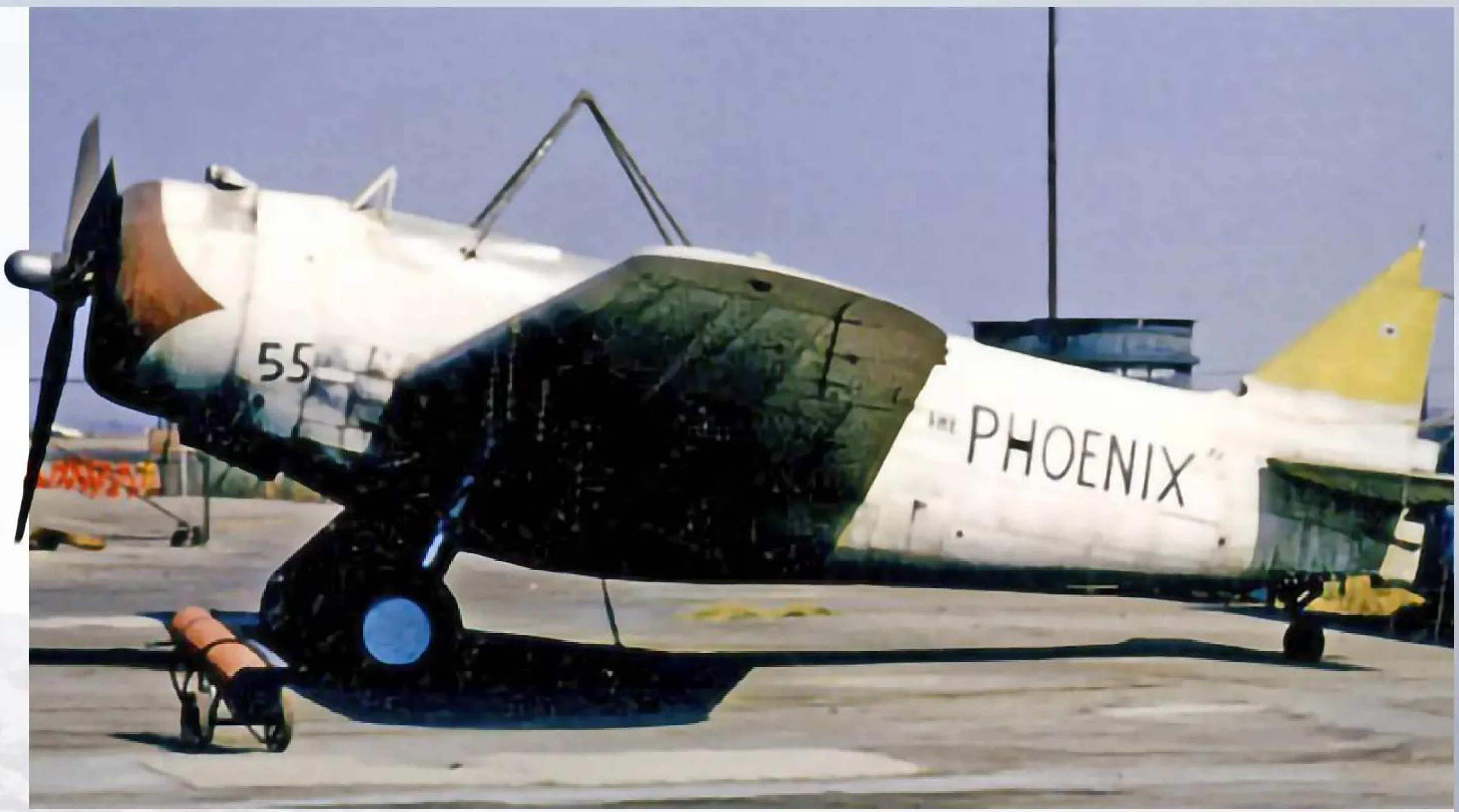
Only 17 of the mighty Howard 500 were built and the type was so highly-modified that it was considered a new aircraft rather than a conversion of a Lockheed PV. Featuring a stretched fuselage, R-2800 CB engines, pressurization, and other modifications, the Howard 500 was the hot-rod of its day. However, the type became quickly obsolete with the new generation of business jets. On 7 July 1979, N721N was supposedly on a training flight from Atlanta to Fort Lauderdale when it crashed in the ocean near Aruba in the Caribbean Sea — over 1000 miles from Fort Lauderdale. The aircraft was apparently on a drug run, became lost, and ditched. The crew of three survived and were released after extensive questioning.



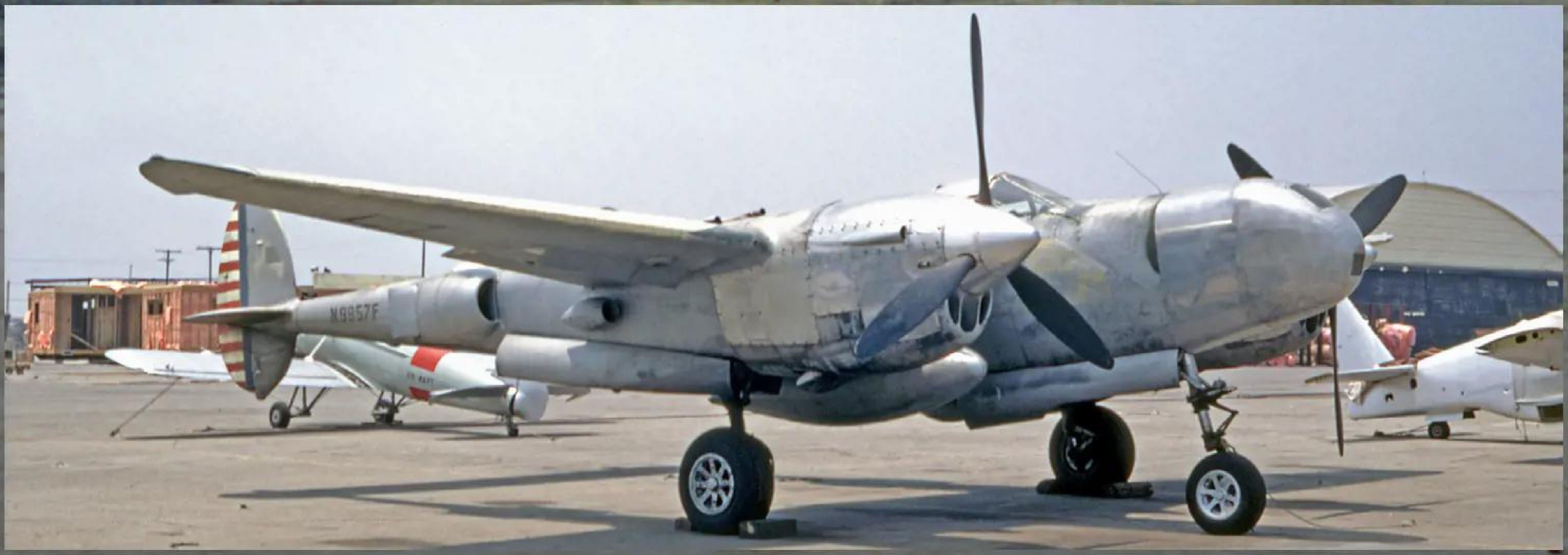
As the government began to dispose of its Beech AT-11 Kansan fleet of bombardier trainers after WWII and into the 1950s, buyers were quickly found that used the plane as a workhorse for a variety of duties, but most were associated with aerial survey work. One such aircraft was AT-11 USAAF 41-27512 (c/n 1357) that was purchased by Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys during 1957. Operating out of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Hurd had several bases scattered around the country from which the company flew a variety of aircraft on survey missions. Once acquired, the AT-11 received the civil registration of N49332. The plane was modified for its new role and this can be seen by the mount added above the nose along with the partial metalizing of the plexiglass bubble. The plane soon had its registration changed to N506MH so that it would fit into the fleet registration system established by Hurd. The active life of the aircraft was not particularly long and by 1964 it was photographed at the Hurd base at Santa Barbara, California, stripped of engines and other parts. Both registrations were visible on the aluminum airframe and it is presumed the hulk was scrapped. The registration was cancelled in 1971 with a note that that the last annual inspection had been carried out in February 1958.



One has to wonder if airport workers gave a second thought to the sight and sound of a de Havilland Mosquito entering the landing pattern at Bluie West One in Greenland during May 1956. If they had worked at the field for some time, then the answer would be a definite “no” since the airport had seen the arrival and departure of thousands of combat aircraft during WWII. Freshly painted in a light blue and red color scheme, Mosquito B Mk. 35 TA717/N9911F carries the title “Fotogramex” on the forward fuselage. Passing through Los Angeles where it operated for a brief period of time, the Mosquito eventually arrived at its base in Mexico City where it obtained the Mexican registration of XB-TOX. The aircraft was eventually towed to a parking spot near a Holiday Inn where its condition rapidly went downhill. The high temperatures and very toxic air played havoc with the wooden skin, which rapidly started to delaminate. The plane was guarded over by an old lady and a pack of vicious mongrels that she would set loose on any aviation enthusiast happening to get near the Mosquito to perhaps take a photo. What was left was eventually acquired by Canadian Mike Meeker who had grand dreams of using the plane, combined with parts from other Mosquitos, to create a flying example. As with most grand dreams, this project (Mr. Meeker wrote numerous letters to *Air Classics* during the 1970s/1980s defining how he wanted to accomplish his goals) just went away and the remains are now in storage with the American Heritage Museum. A quick note about the N9911F and P-38 N9957F registrations. The FAA set aside registrations in the N99**F block that were to be used for civil aircraft that did a lot of flying outside the USA and that is why one sees these registrations on early “working Warbirds.”



Since this spread is focused on surplus photo recon/observation aircraft, we thought this Harry Gann photograph of the North American O-47A operated by The Air Museum (before it became Planes of Fame) would be most appropriate. When Paul Mantz was killed in the crash of the hybrid aircraft built for use in the film *Flight of the Phoenix*, another plane had to be found — and found fast since filming was in the very final stages. A "sort of" replacement came in the form of the ultra-rare O-47 owned by the museum. Built for the Air Corps as USAAC 38-284, the aircraft was a real find for TAM. "I always had a passion for military aircraft of the 1930s so the chance to own an O-47 was a big deal for our growing museum," said Ed Maloney. This plane had operated in Mexico as XB-QEU and XB-KEU before heading back north and becoming N4725V. With a bit of work, Ed and his crew got the O-47 up and flying and then along came the movie studio with an offer the museum could not refuse — money to modify the O-Bird into the *Phoenix*. Always critically short of funding, this cash boost was a real plus for the museum. As can be seen, the modifications were fairly extensive and included removal of the canopy, the fitting in of the bracing post atop the fuselage and a few other things. The plane was flown with "cut out" passengers strapped to the top of the wing. Regular dummies were originally used but these created a tremendous amount of drag and made for some dangerous flying characteristics. Accordingly, the studio made flat cut-out passengers that presented a low profile. The plane can be seen staggering through the air towards the end of the film and we will leave judgement to the viewer on whether or not this conversion was a convincing *Phoenix*.



In past "Friday Night Oldies," we have featured photos of Lockheed Lightning N9957F in different configurations. In this photo taken during the 1970s, the plane had its extremely long photo nose removed and replaced with a more conventional F-5G style nose. Seen at Chino, California, the aircraft was owned by collector David Tallichet. Note the Planes of Fame P-51A to the right and the Ryan PT-22 in Navy markings under the tail. AC

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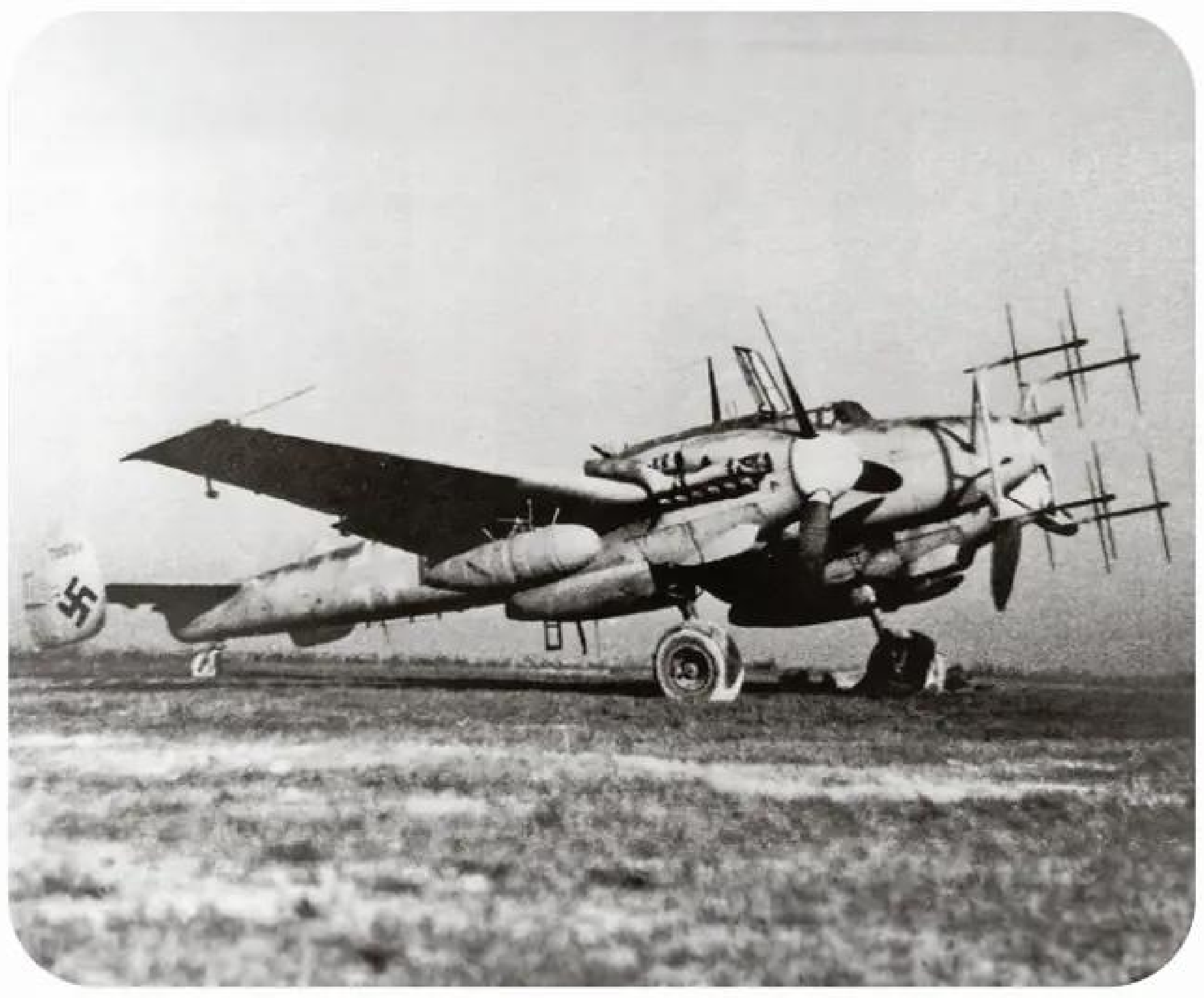

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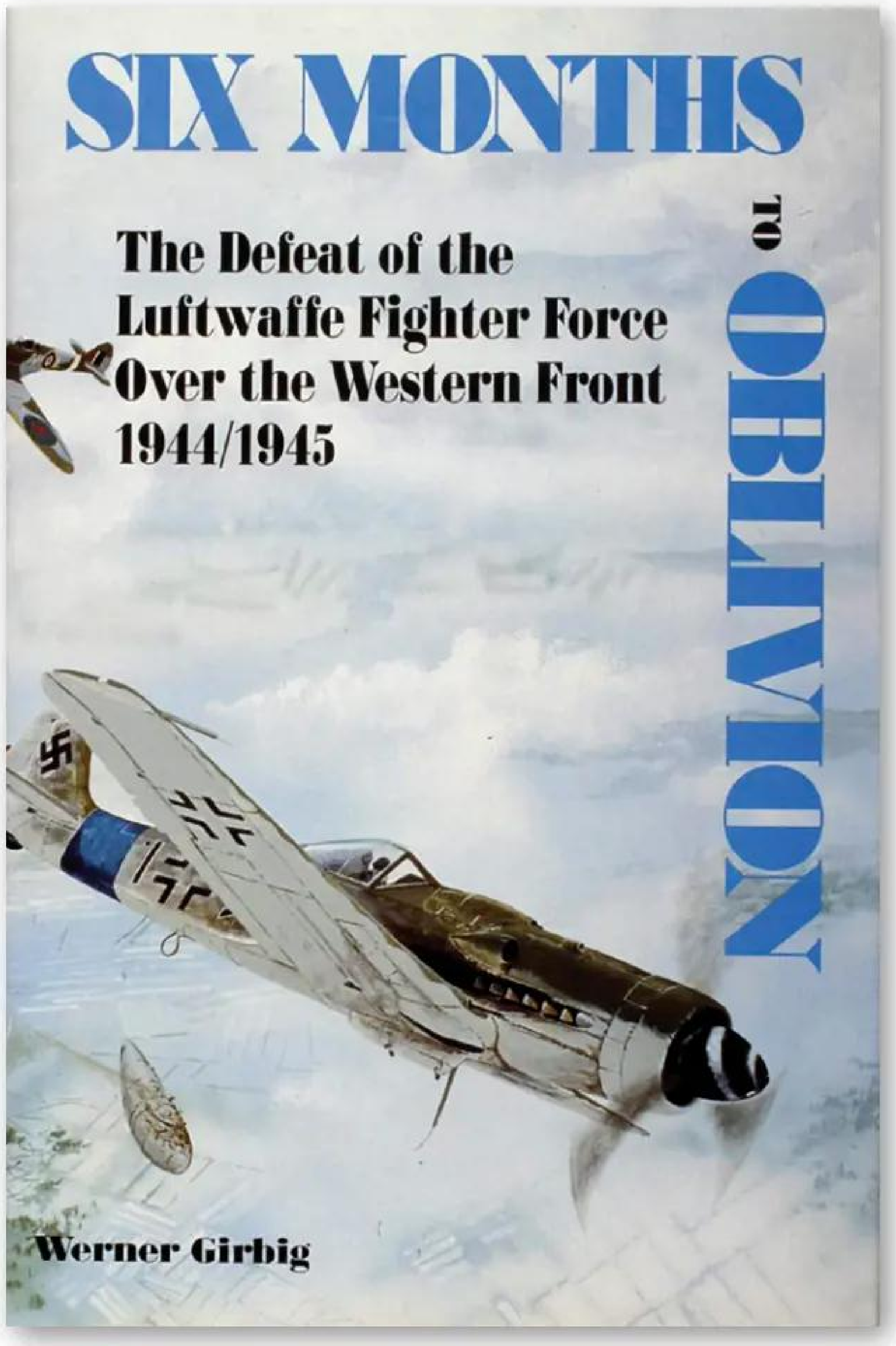
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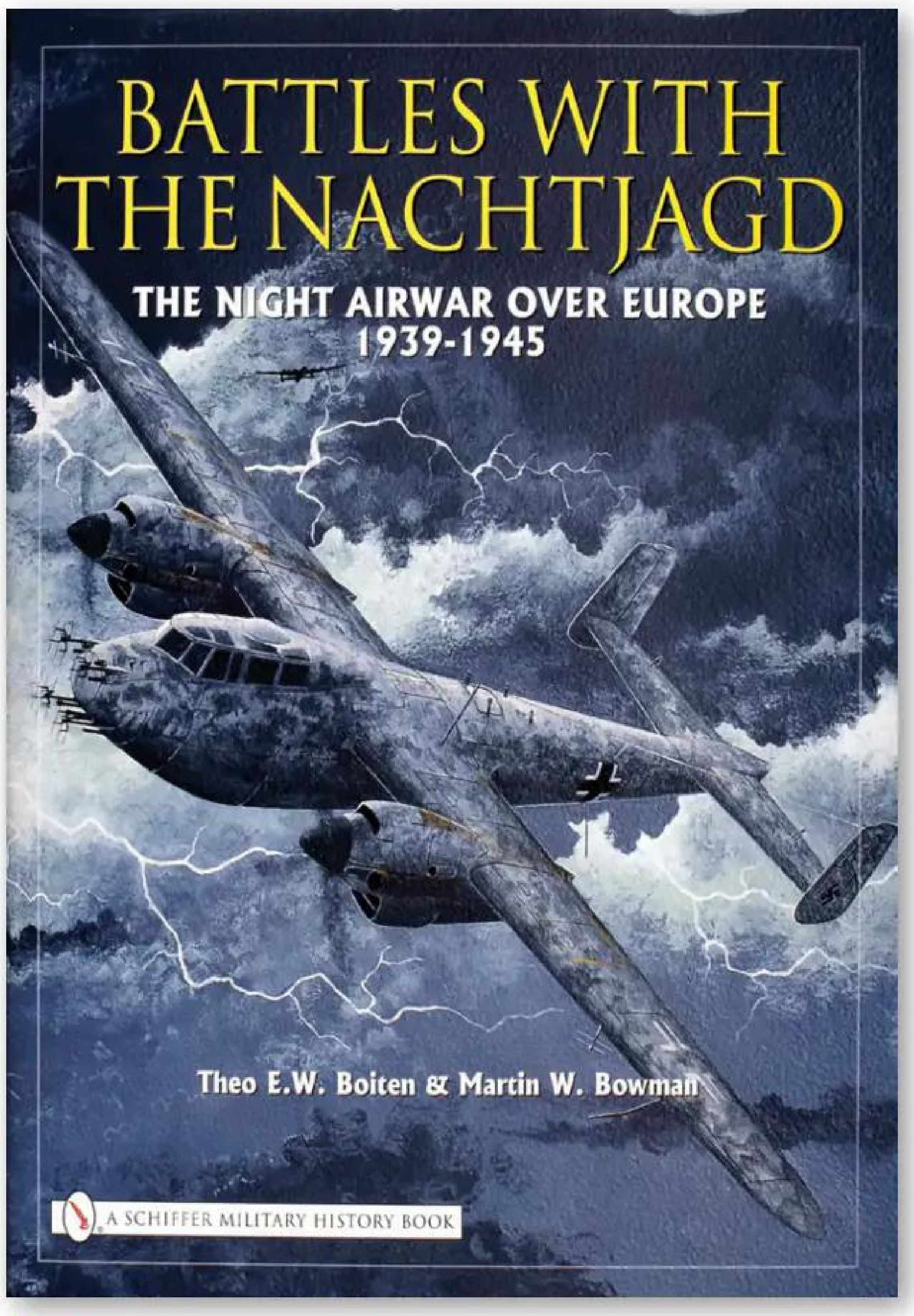
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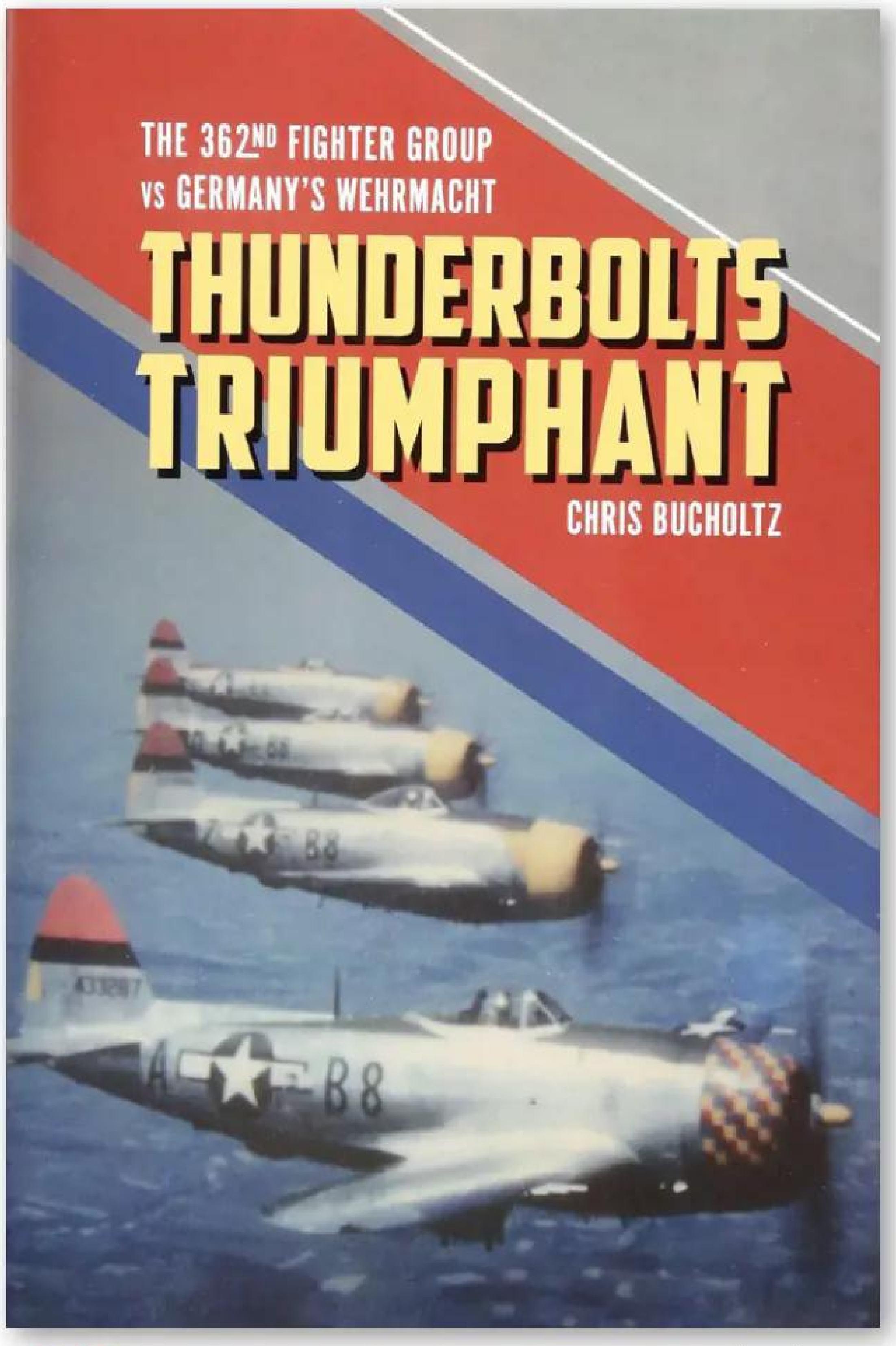
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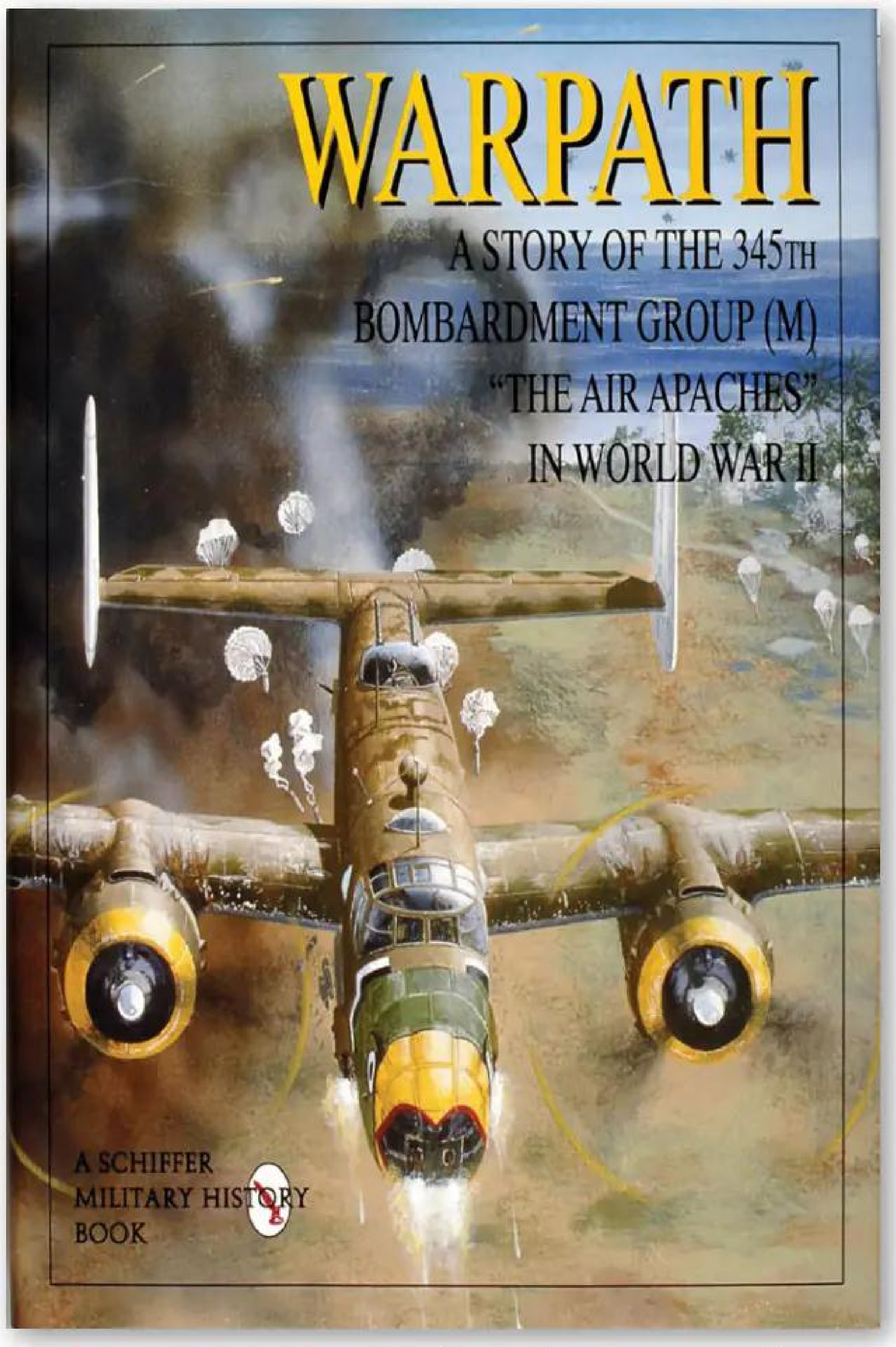
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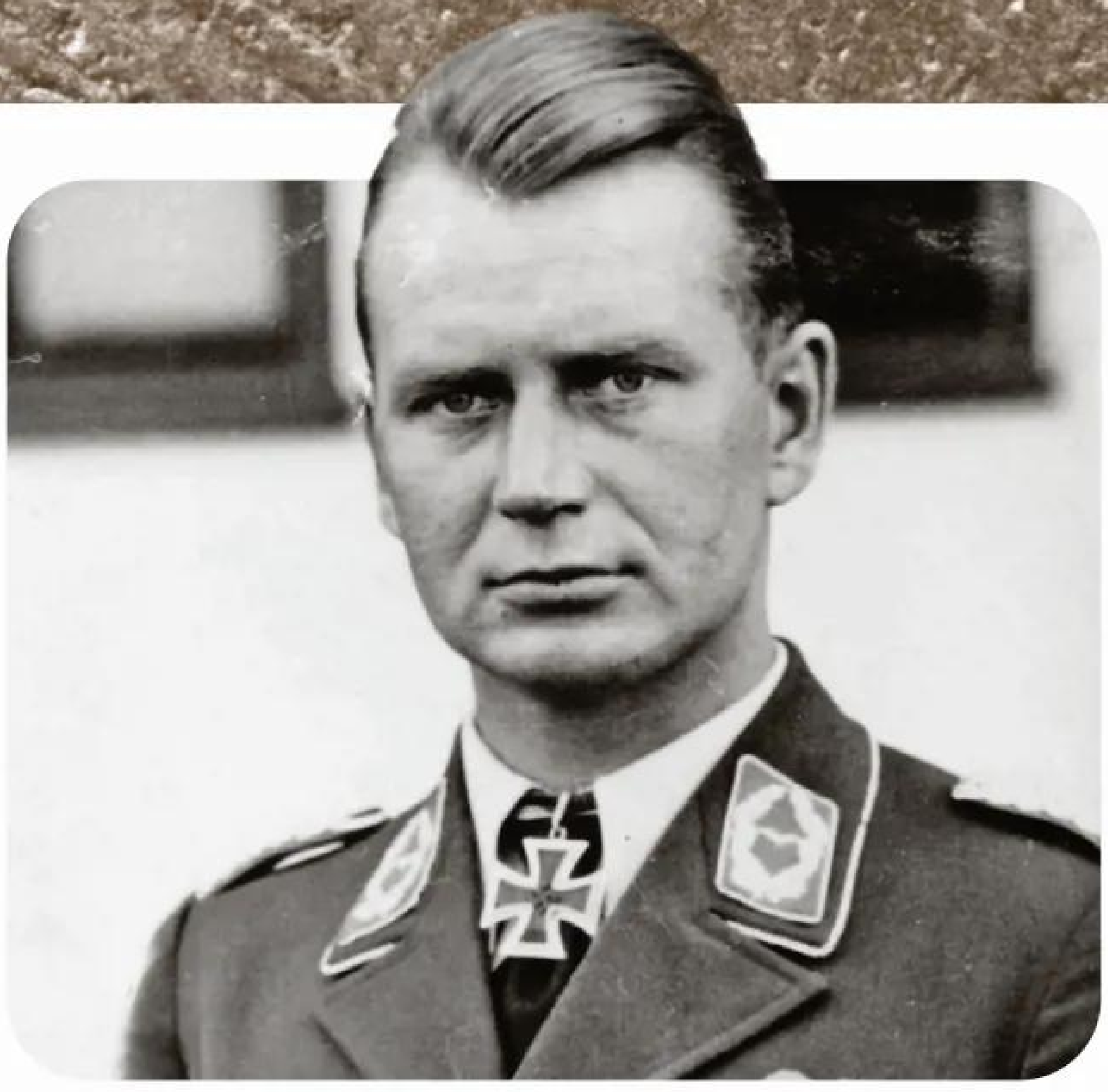

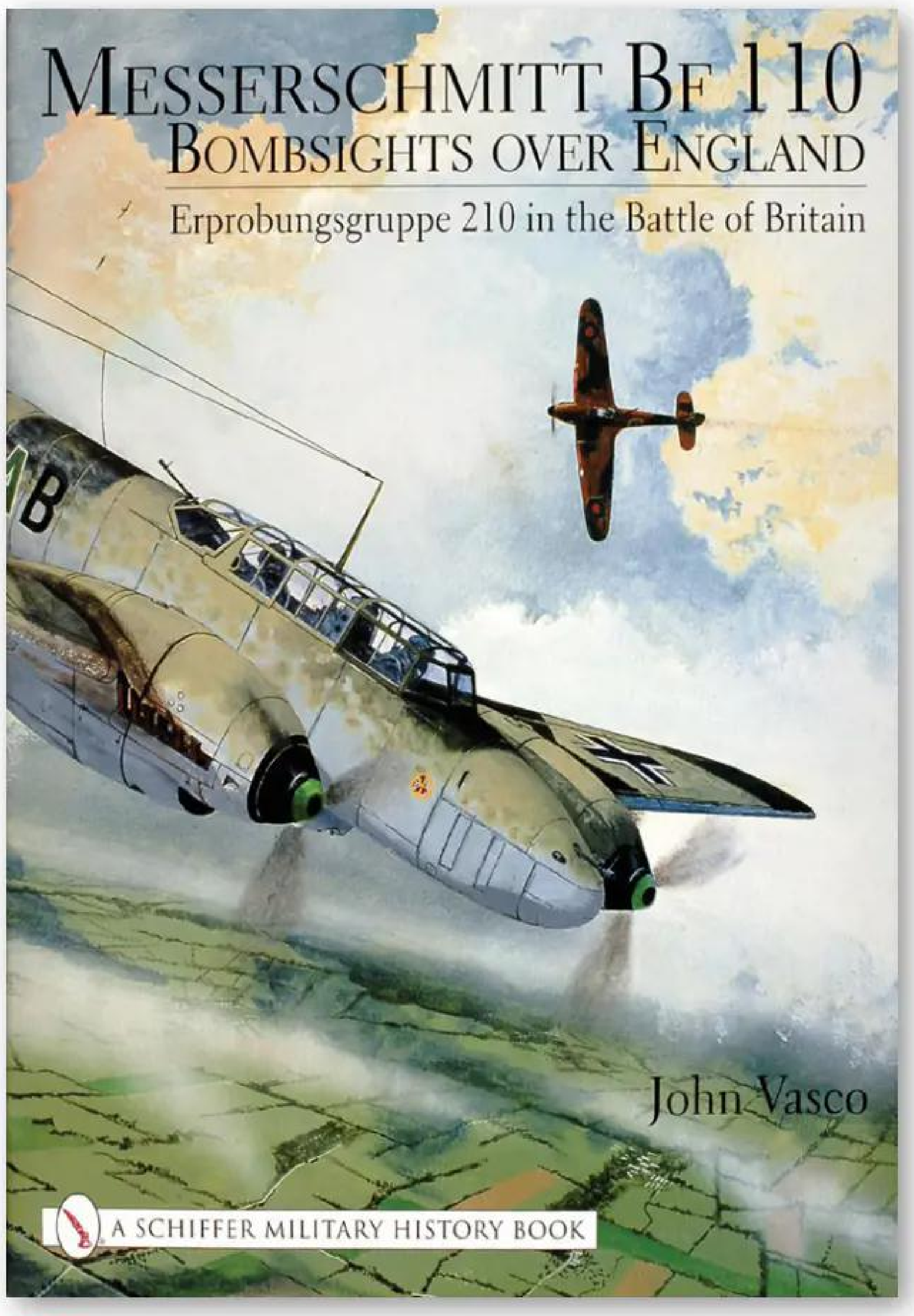
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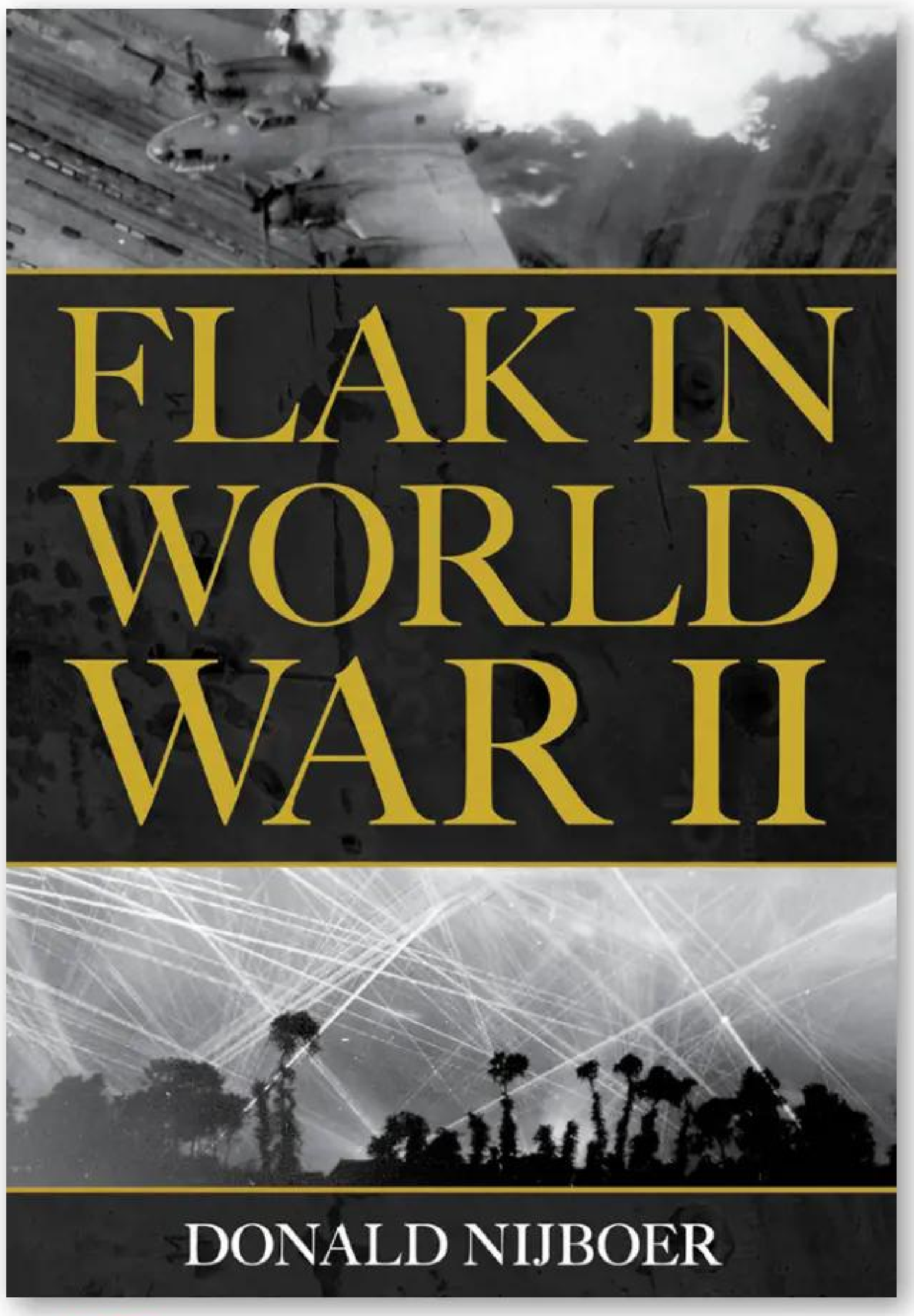
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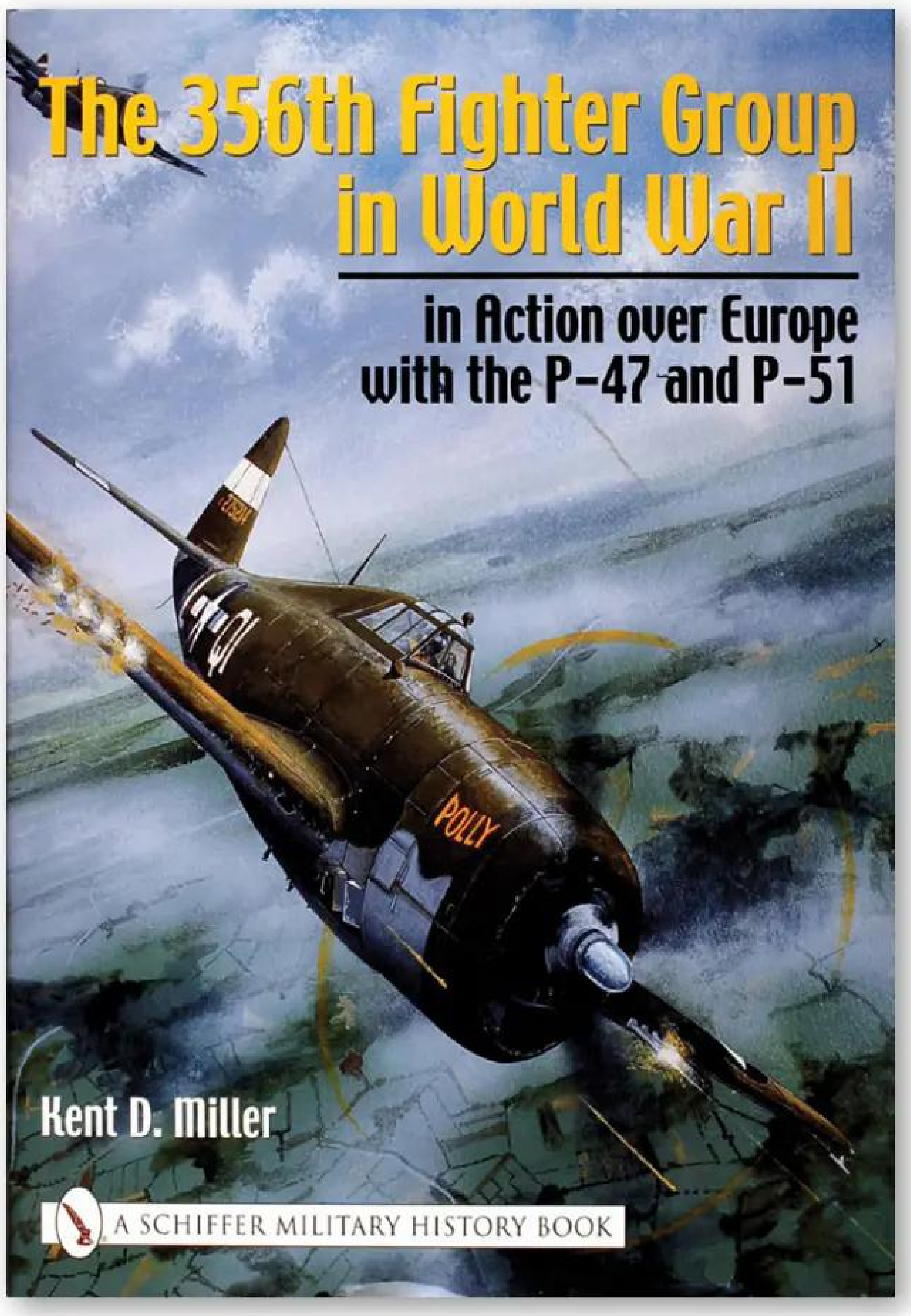
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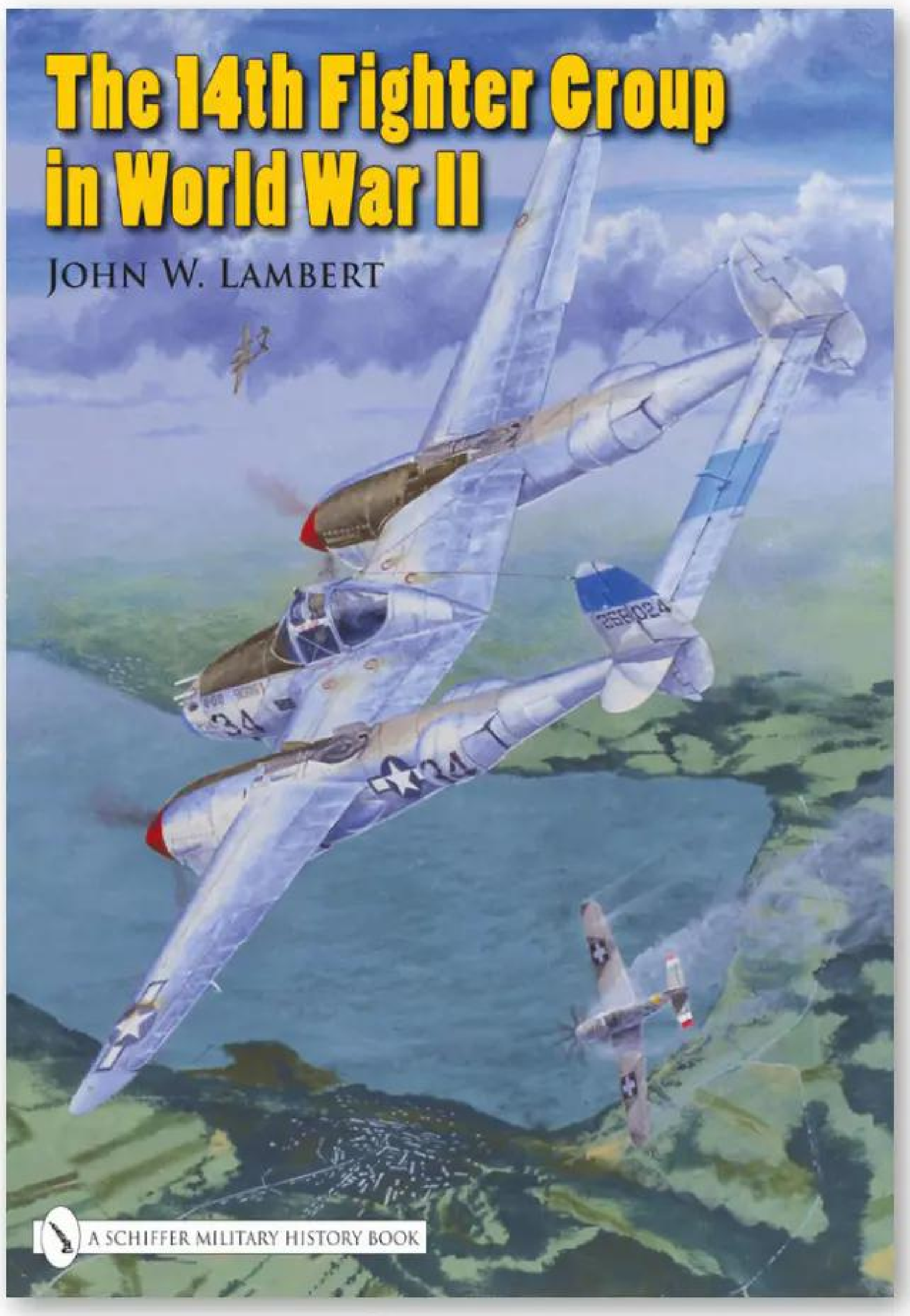
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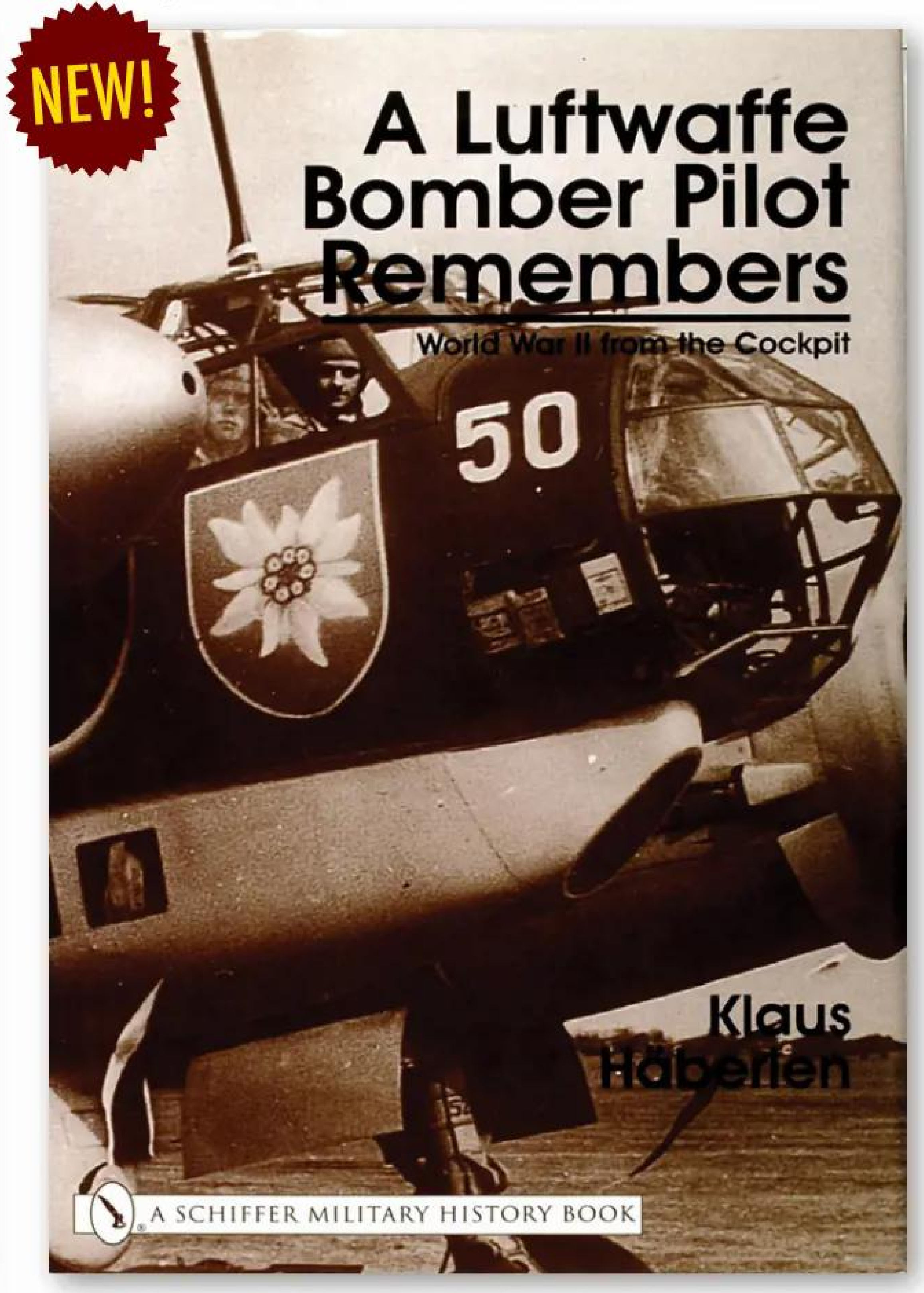
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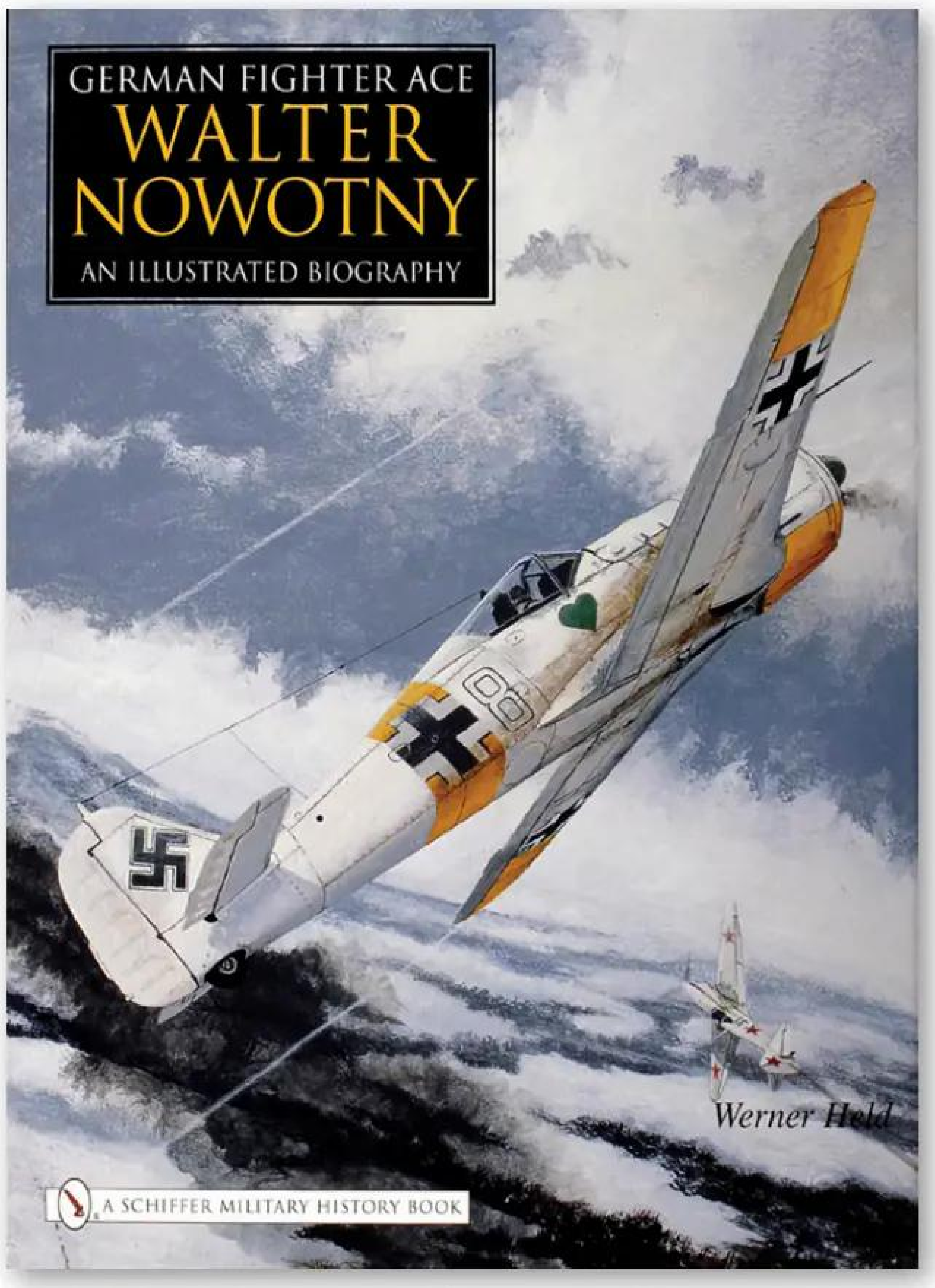
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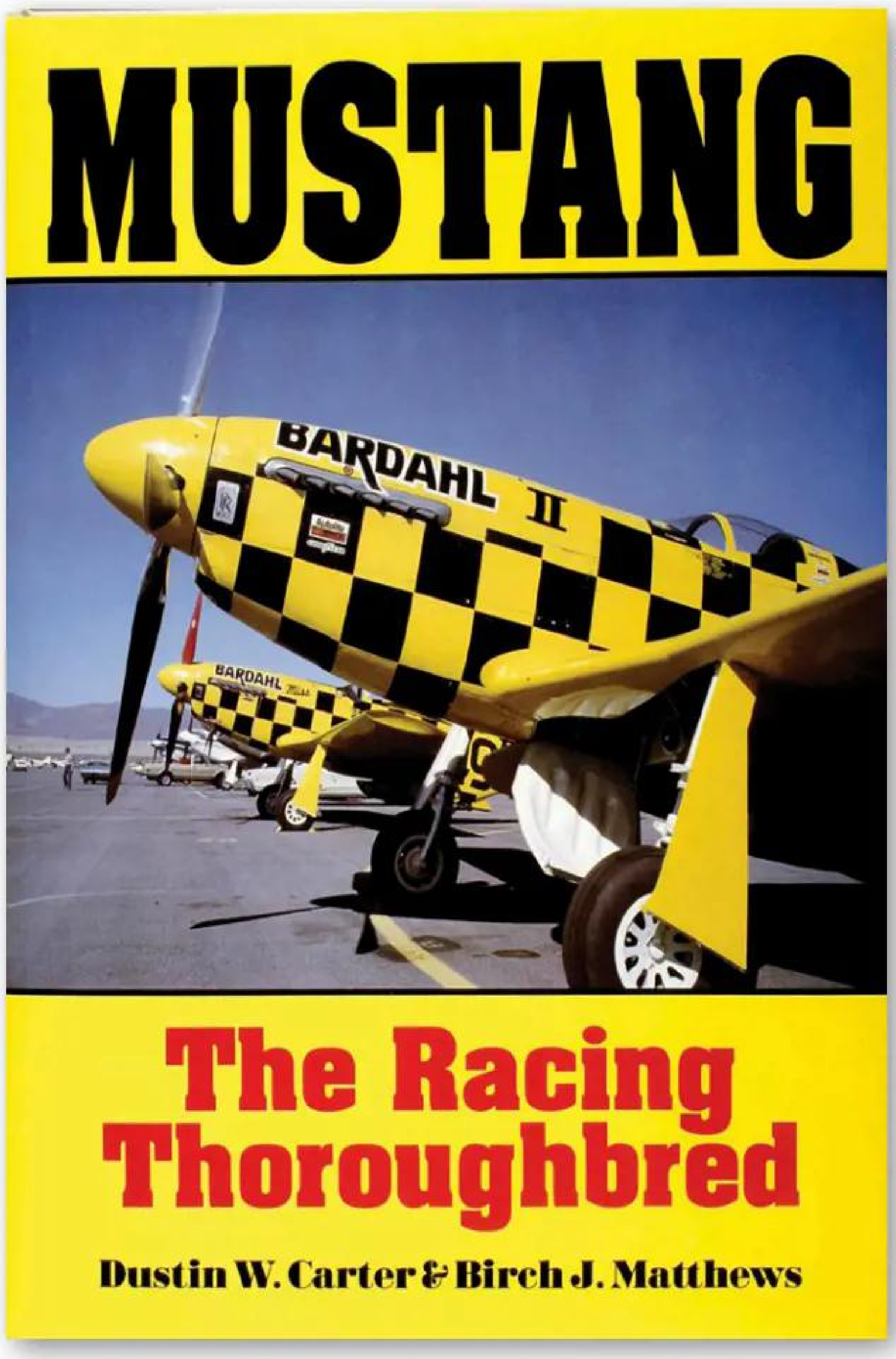
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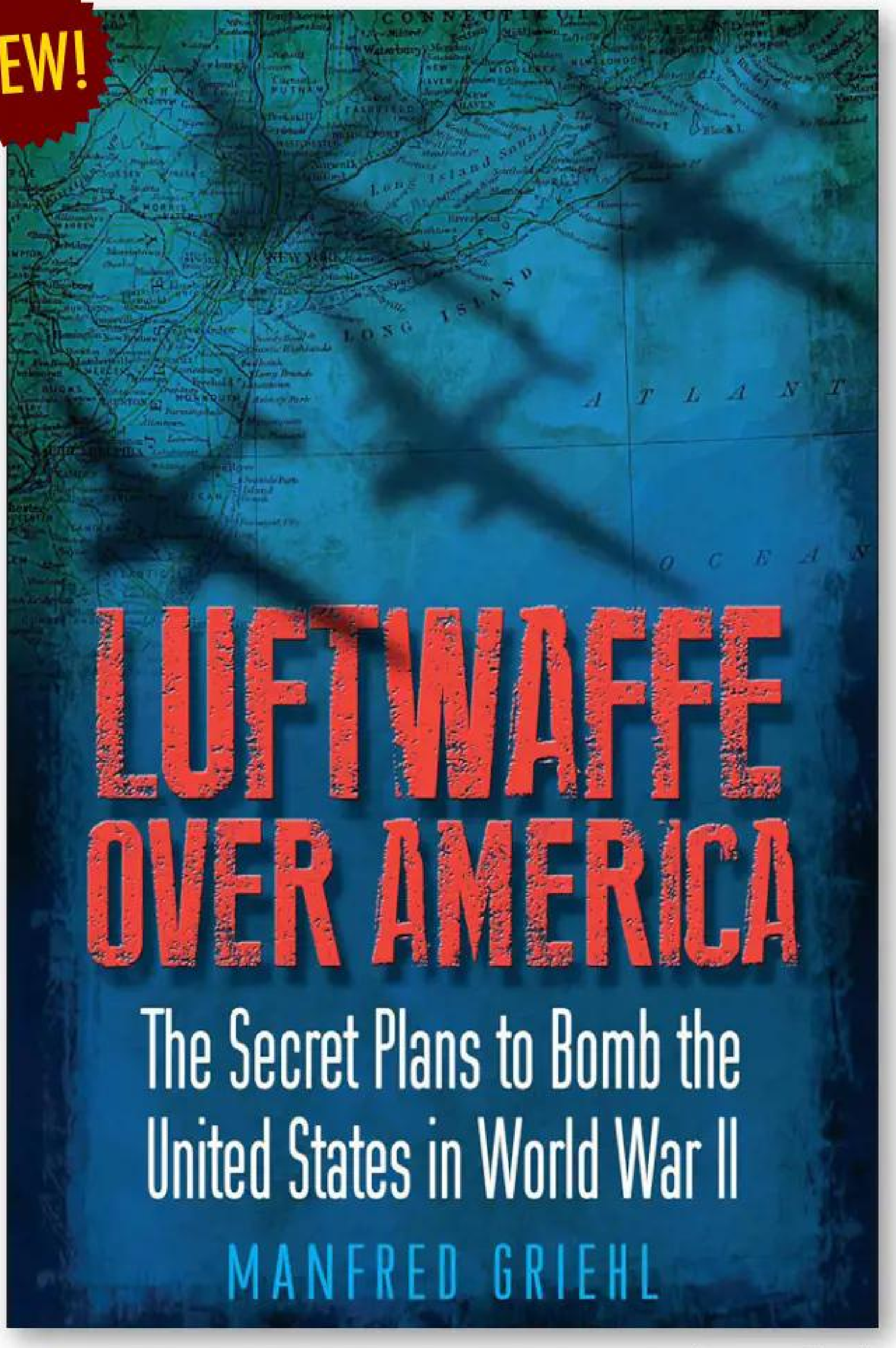
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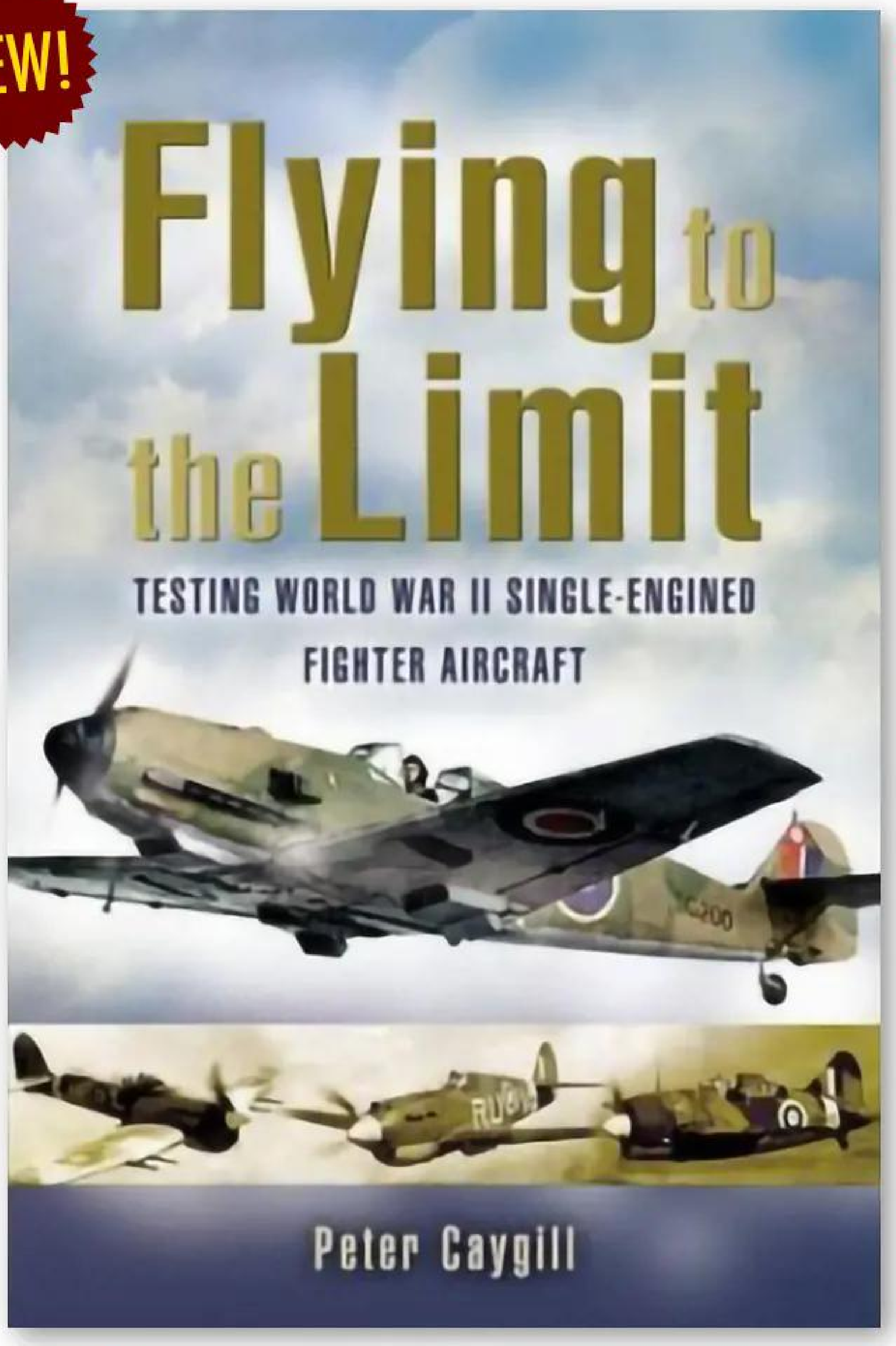
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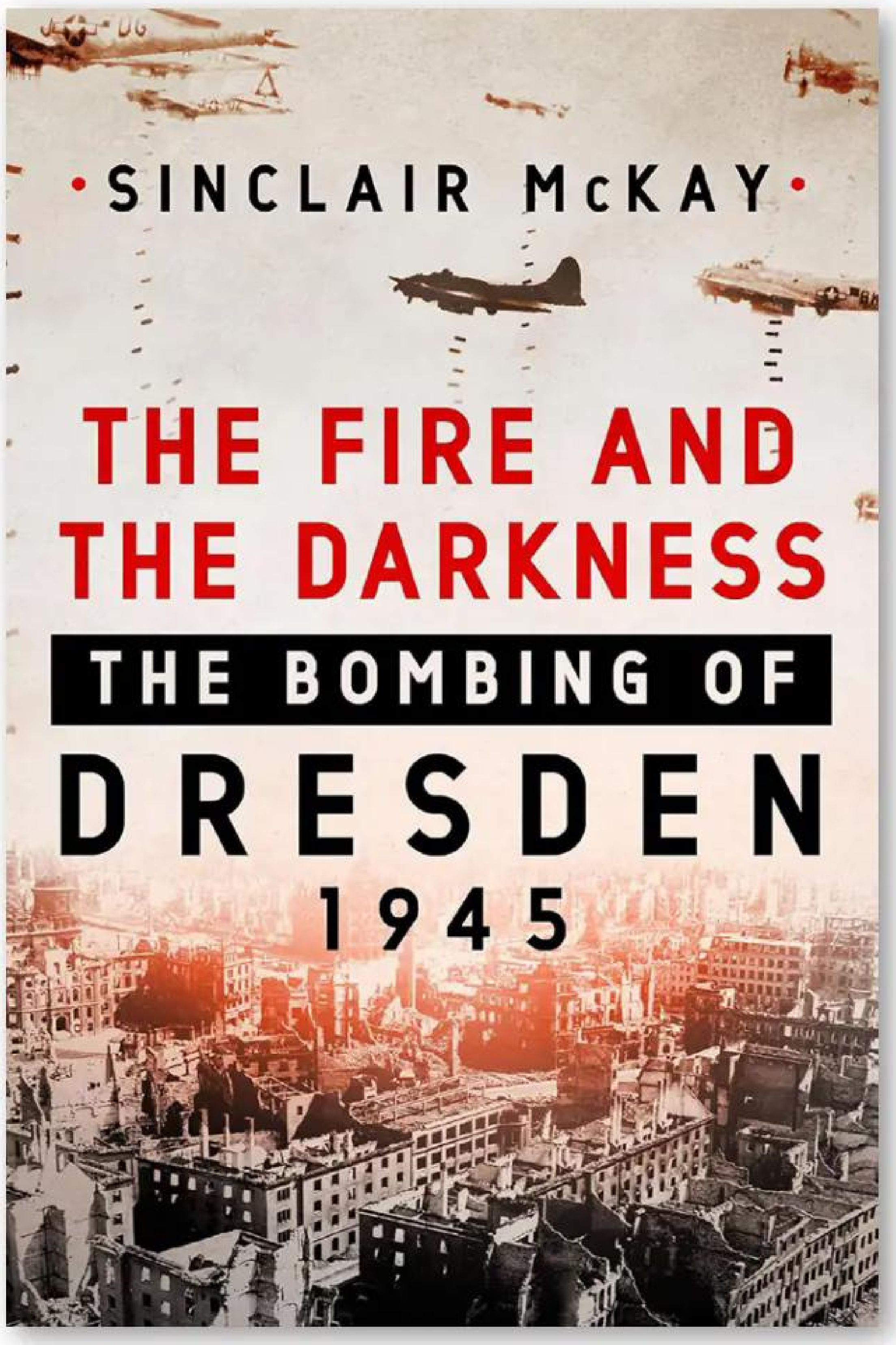
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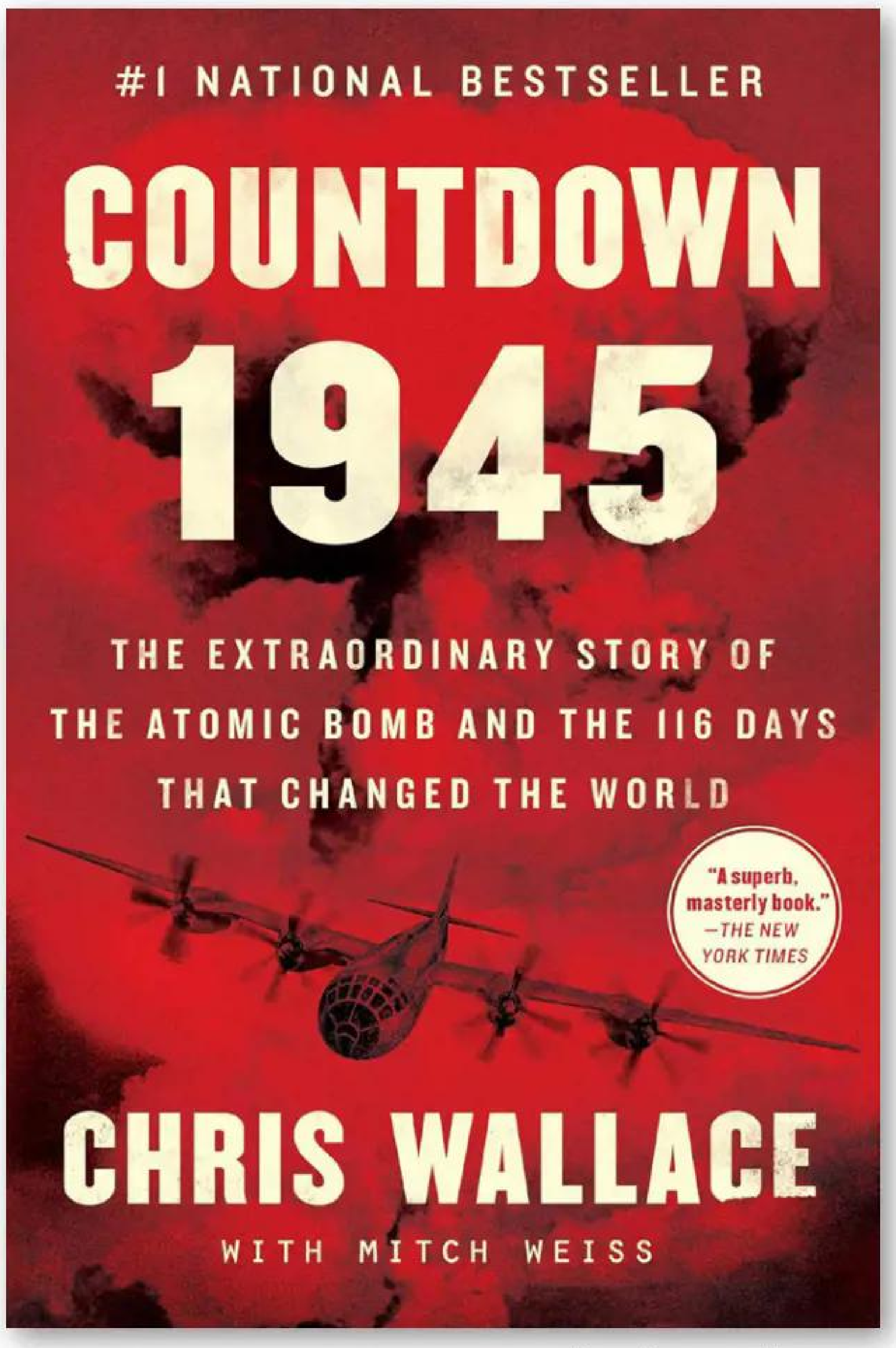
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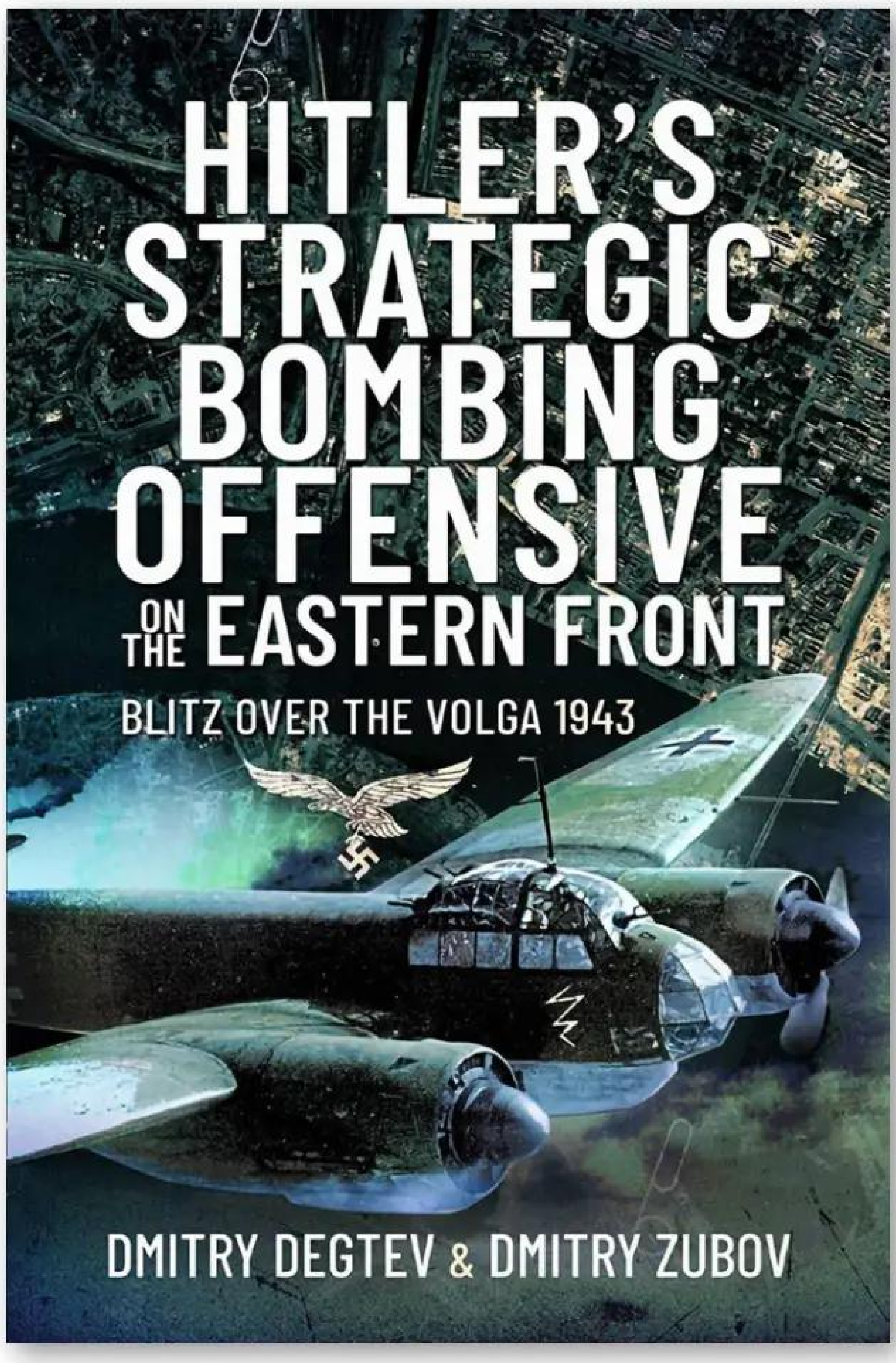
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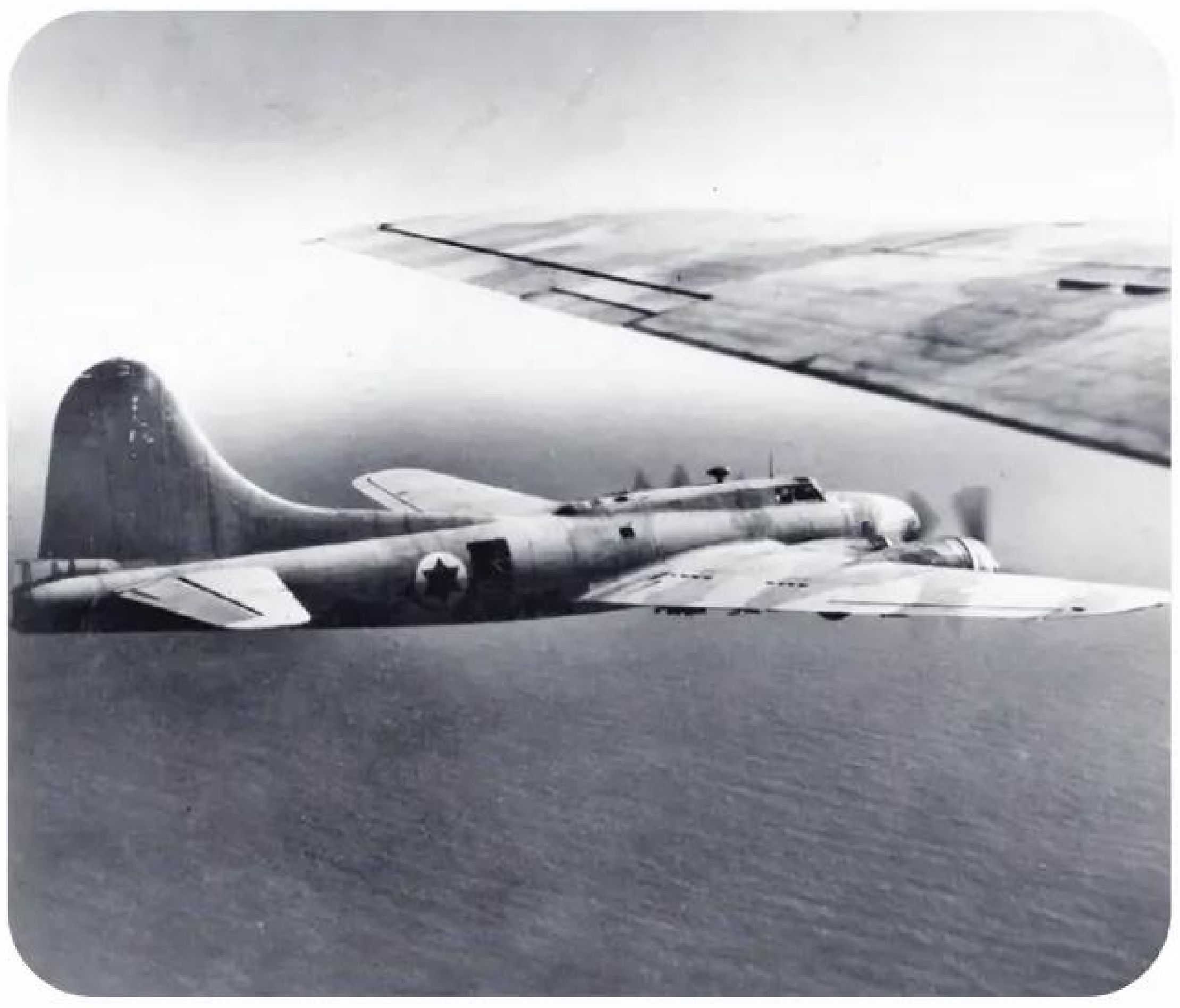

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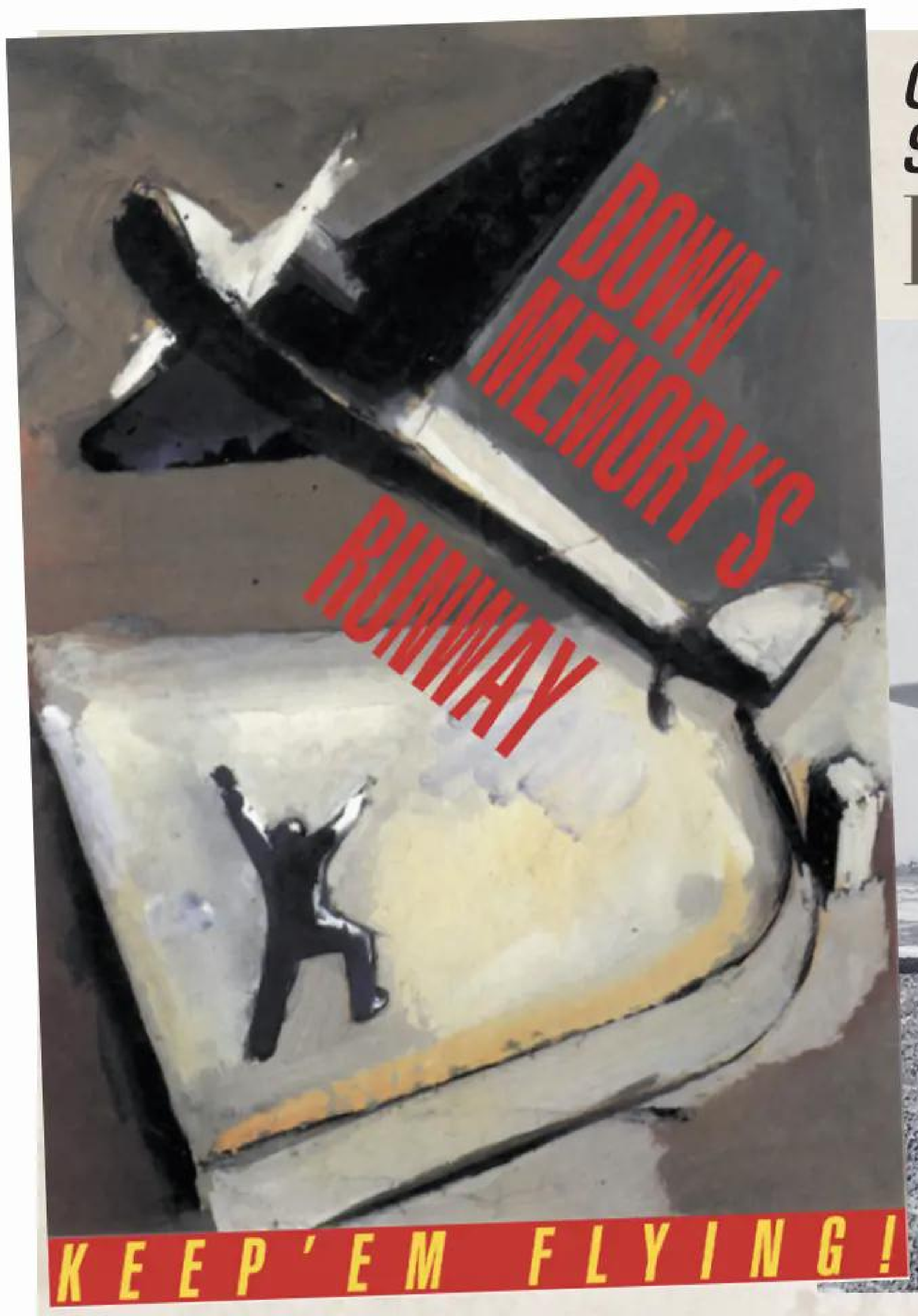
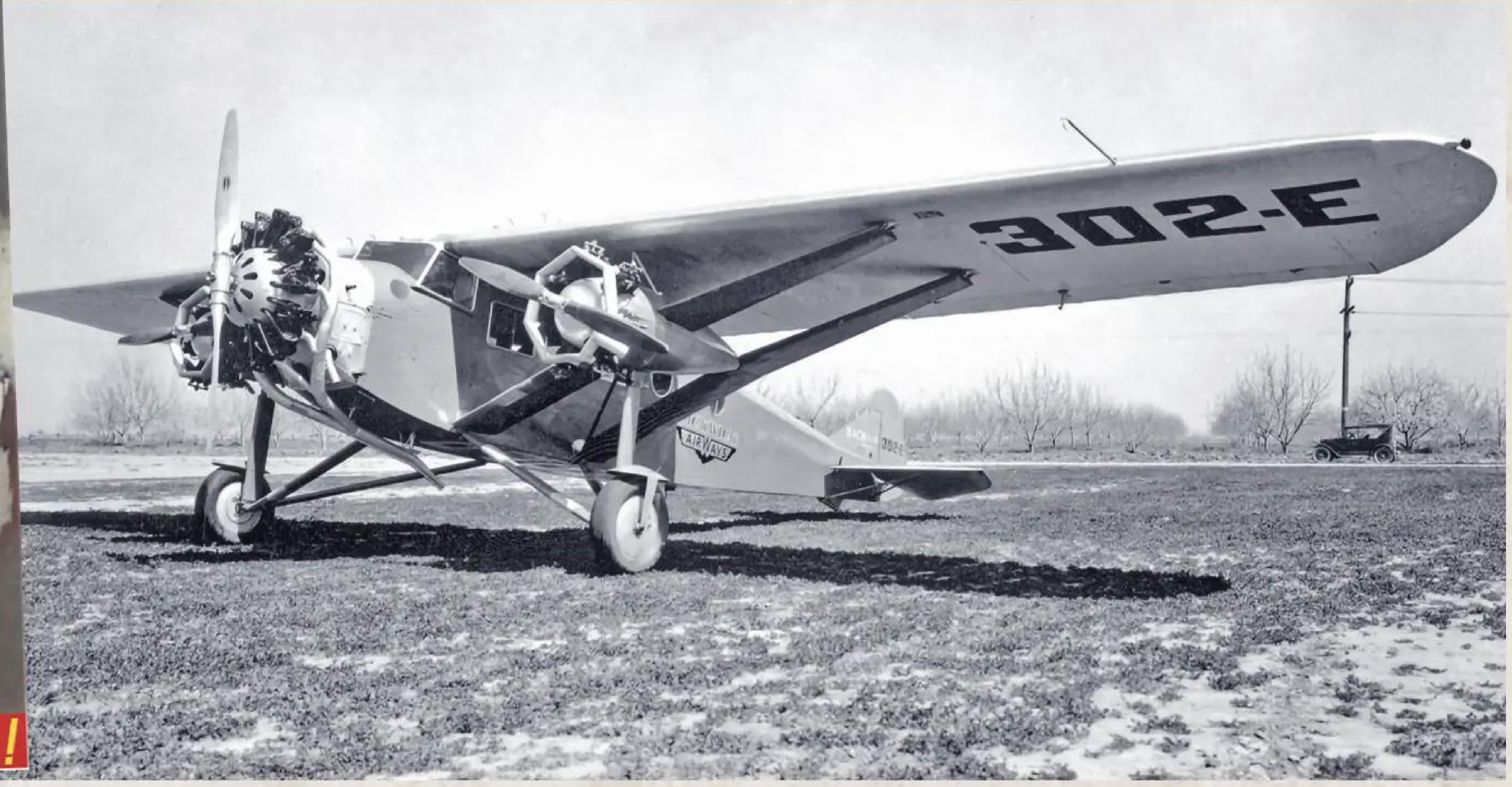
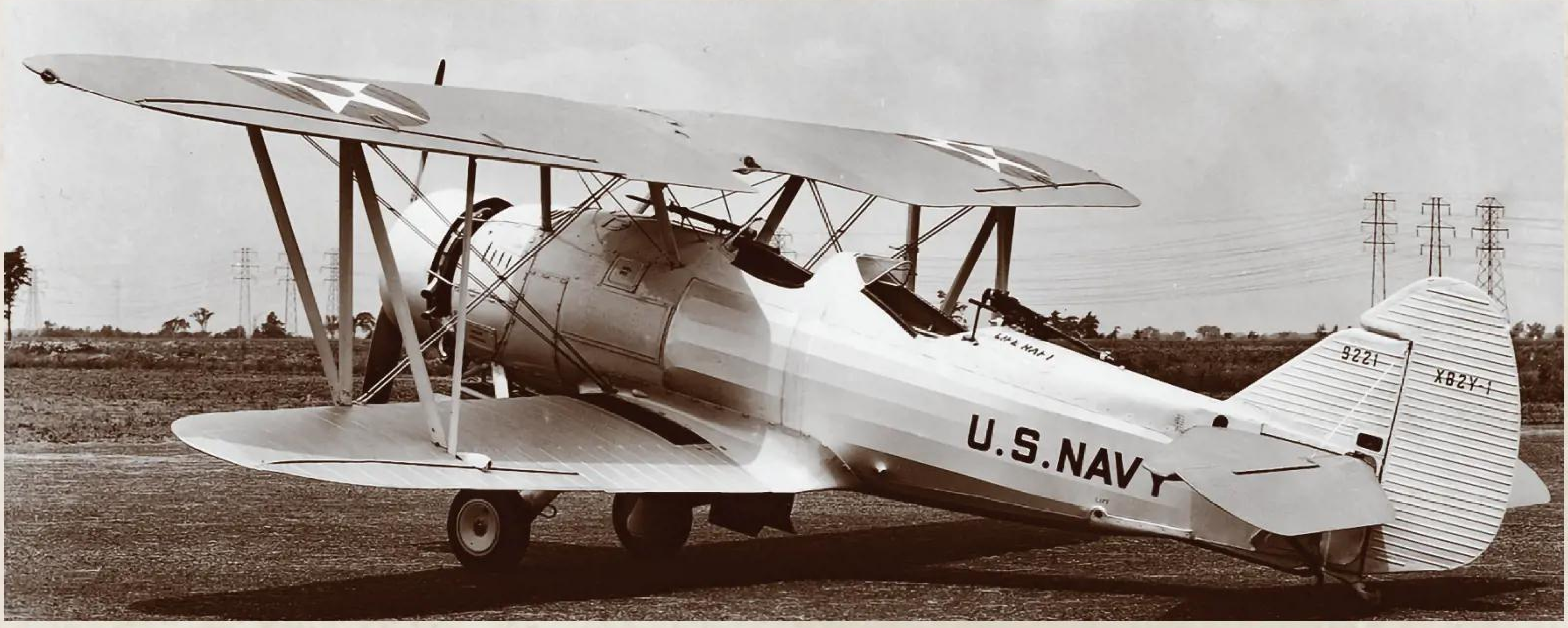


GALLERY OF AMERICAN AIRCRAFT SINCE THE DAWN OF MANNED FLIGHT

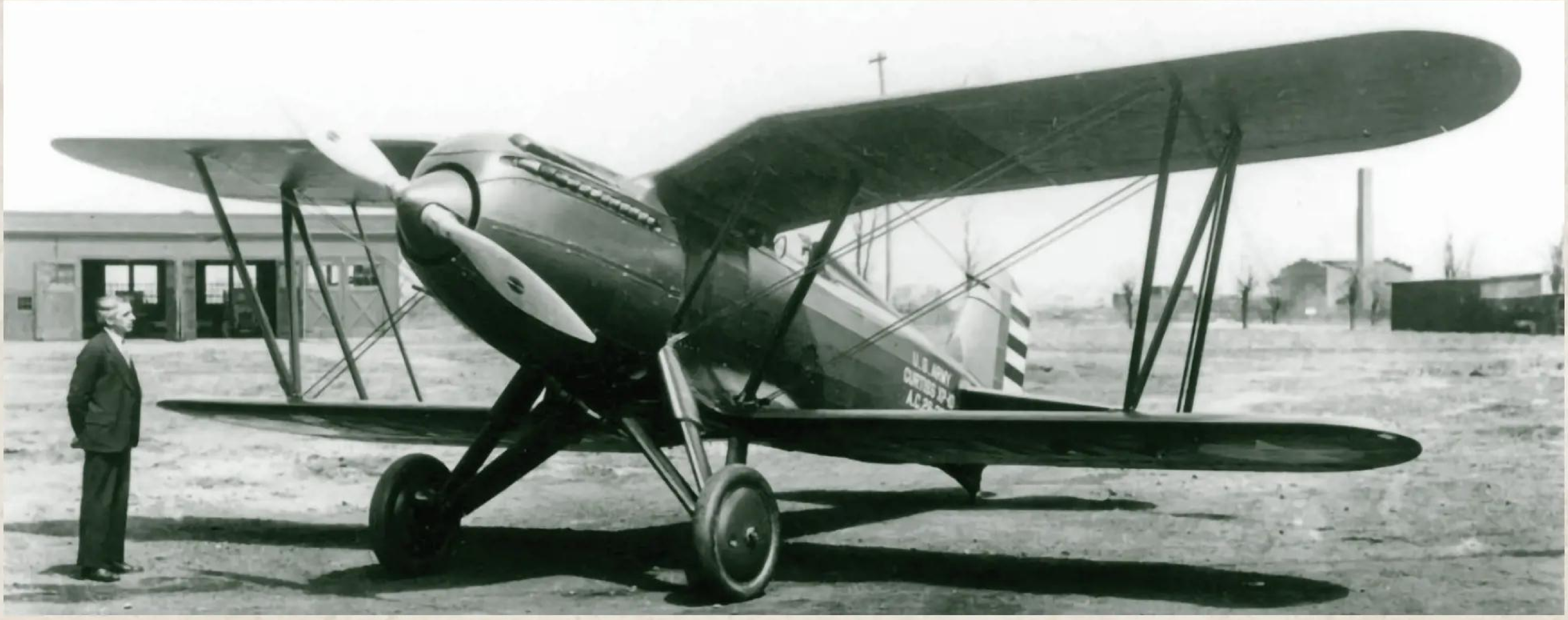
BY ADAM STANTON



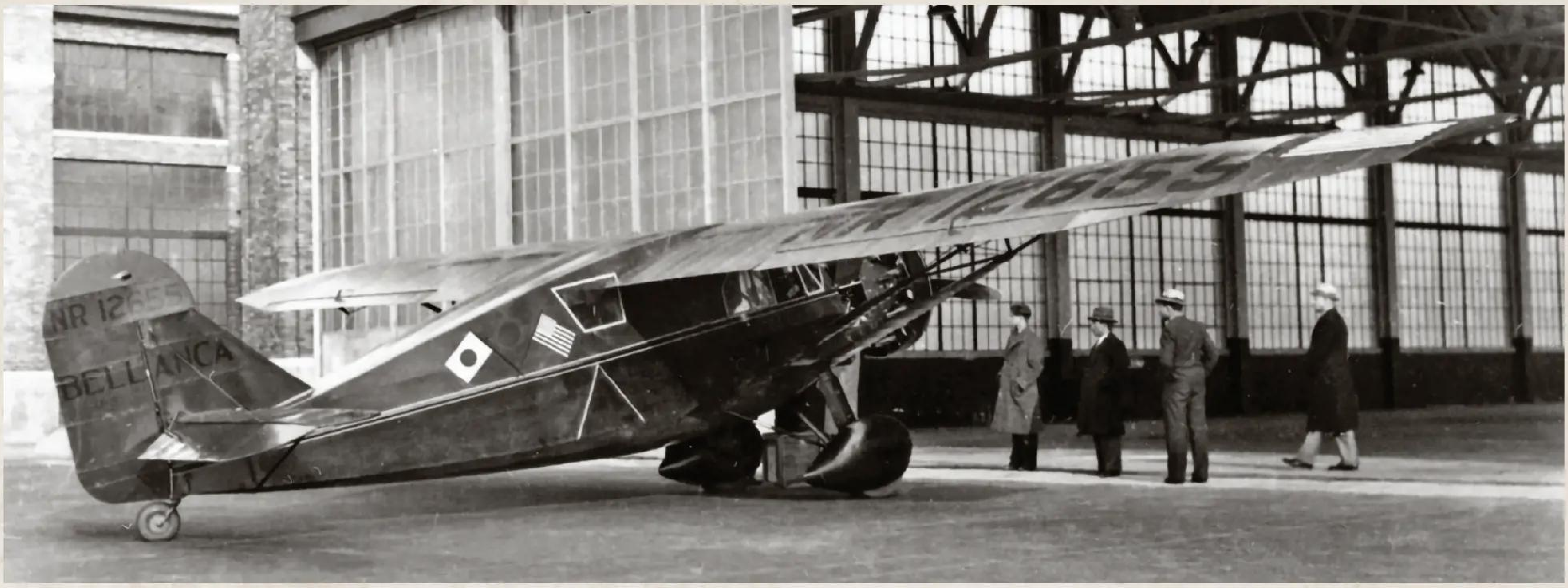
In the rush to create a variety of three-engine transports during the late 1920s/early 1930s, the Bach Aircraft Company of Los Angeles enjoyed modest success with their line of tri-motor aircraft. Bach 3-CT-6 Air Yacht NC302E (c/n 6) was photographed during 1929 in the markings of Pickwick Airways. An off-shoot of a bus company with the same name, Pickwick Airways flew a number of routes but its most successful was the Los Angeles to Agua Caliente casino resort near Tijuana. Pickwick would haul gamblers and drinkers back and forth with their Bachs but NC302E was damaged in a June 1929 accident. Trucked back to the factory for repairs, it was destroyed when the hangar caught fire.



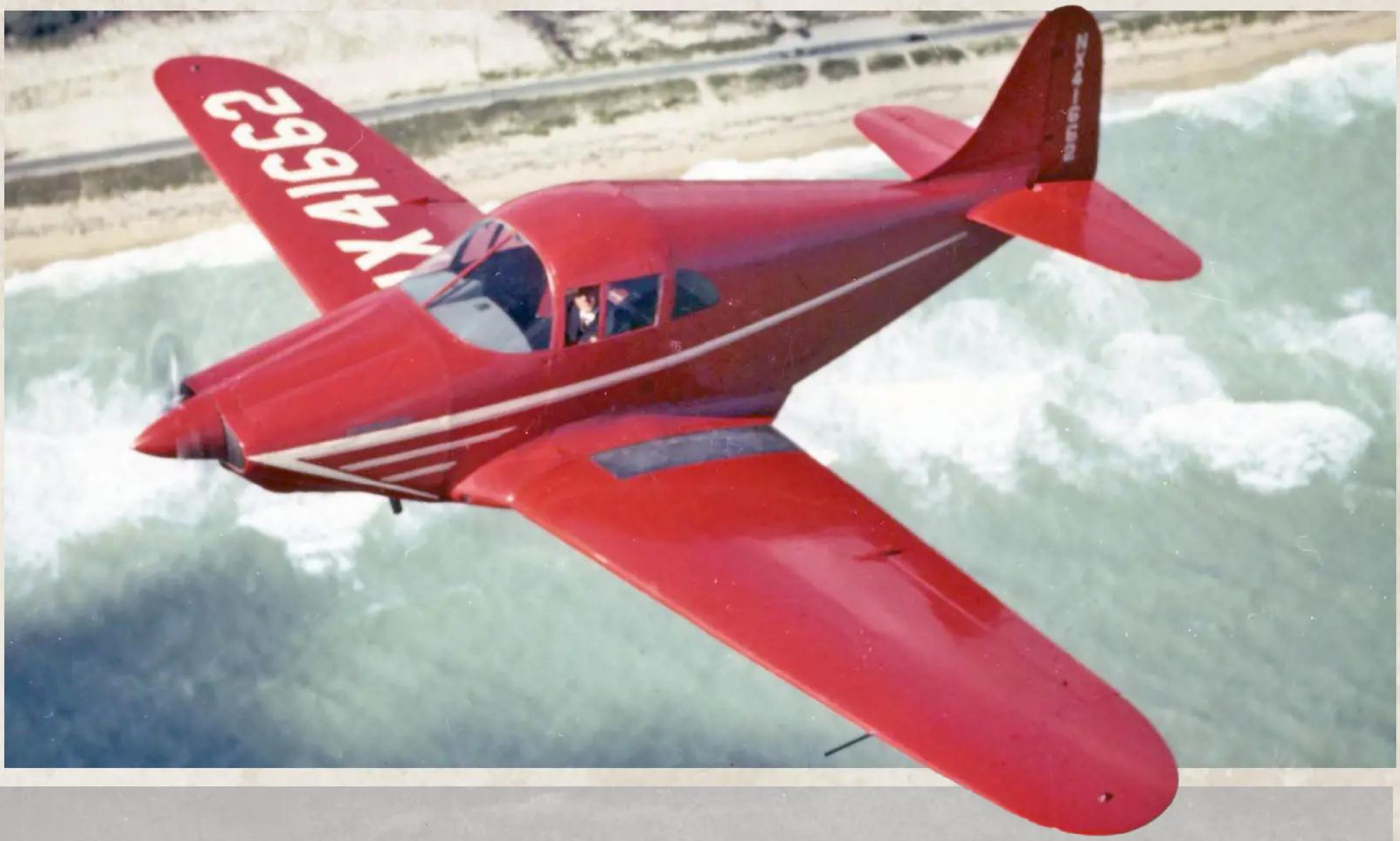
Little-known Consolidated XB2Y-1 was an attempt to build a new dive-bomber for the USN. Testing showed that BuNo 9221 was inferior in performance and overly expensive to build. Only the single aircraft was finished and the contract was awarded to Great Lakes for their BG dive-bomber series. The XB2Y-1 was transferred to NACA for aerodynamic work.



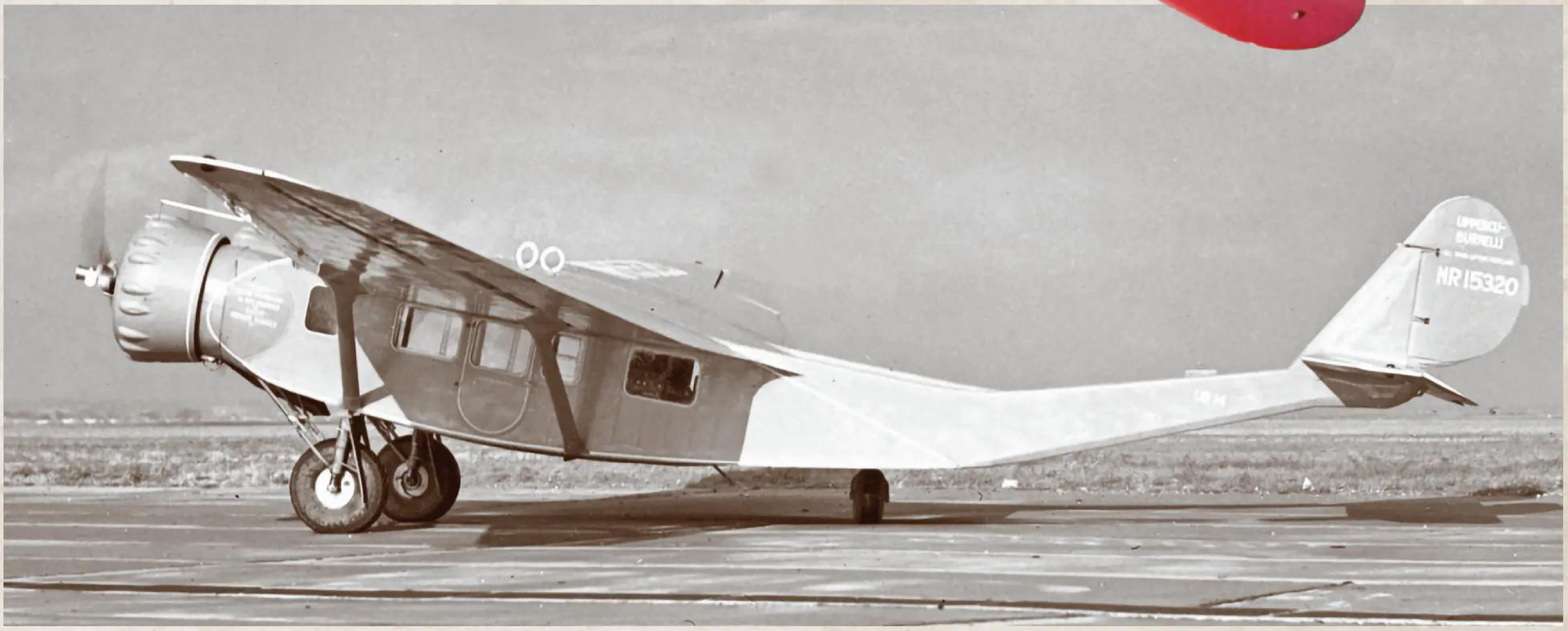
The Curtiss XP-10 was a design created to eliminate some of the visibility problems faced by pilots of traditional biplane fighters. The gull wing did offer some upward and forward visibility improvements but the Air Corps did not like the use of surface radiators for engine cooling and found them troublesome and inefficient. Photographed on 3 May 1930, the aircraft flew for just about ten hours before being scrapped in August 1931.



The ill-fated Bellanca J-3 was a modification of the company's CH-400 design and it was built for a proposed non-stop Los Angeles to Japan flight. The deepened fuselage held extra fuel for the mission but on 29 March 1932, Capt. Yoshinori Nagoya took the plane, carrying the American registration NR12655, up from Floyd Bennett Field but it crashed and the pilot was killed.

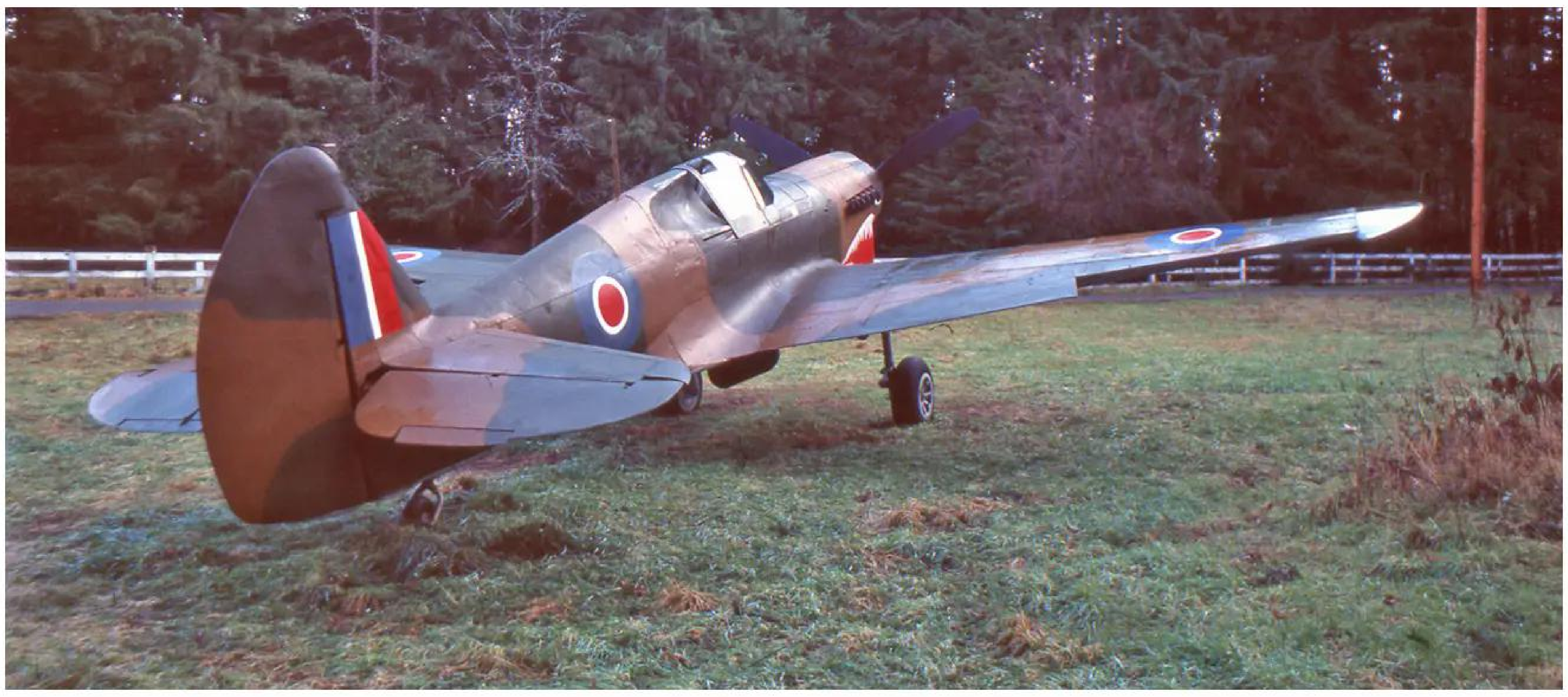


This post-WWII promotional photograph by Hans Groenhoff illustrates the Johnson Rocket 185. Developed from an earlier design, the aircraft, carrying experimental registration NX41662, was advertised as a three-seater but it basically held two with a small baggage payload. The company hoped to sell the plane for around $5000 and about 19 were built. However, the new Beech Bonanza did everything the Rocket could do — and did it better while carrying four.

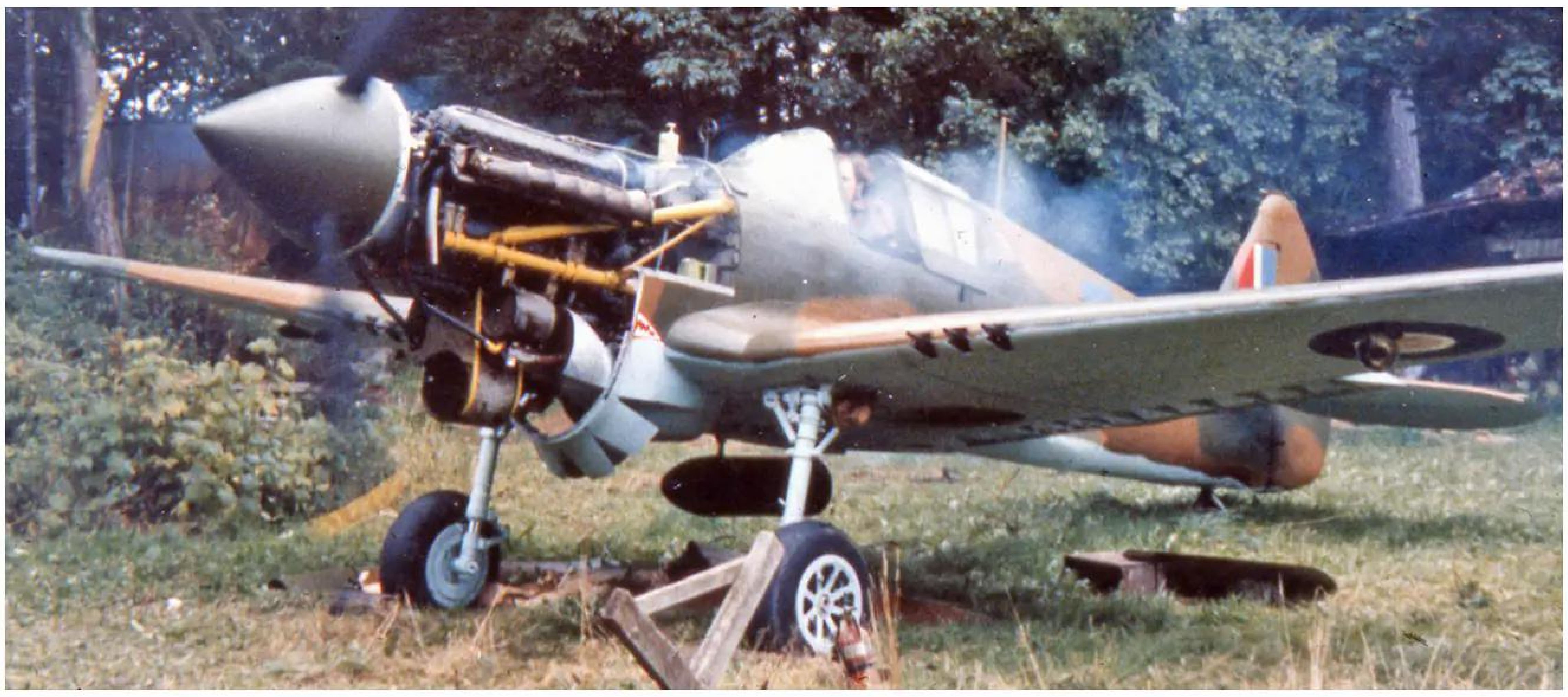


Rudy Arnold photographed the Burnelli UB-14 at Floyd Bennett Field on 6 November 1936. Although called a "flying wing," it wasn't but the UB-14 offered prospects of being able to haul a large load of cargo aloft. On its rudder, NR15320 carries the legend "Uppercu-Burnelli." An agreement had been made to construct the plane in Britain by the firm Cunliffe-Owen but it appears just a single-example was built. NR15320 was shipped to the UK and then back to the States and it was sold to Nicaragua as AN-ABH in November 1943 but its history goes cold after that point. **AC**

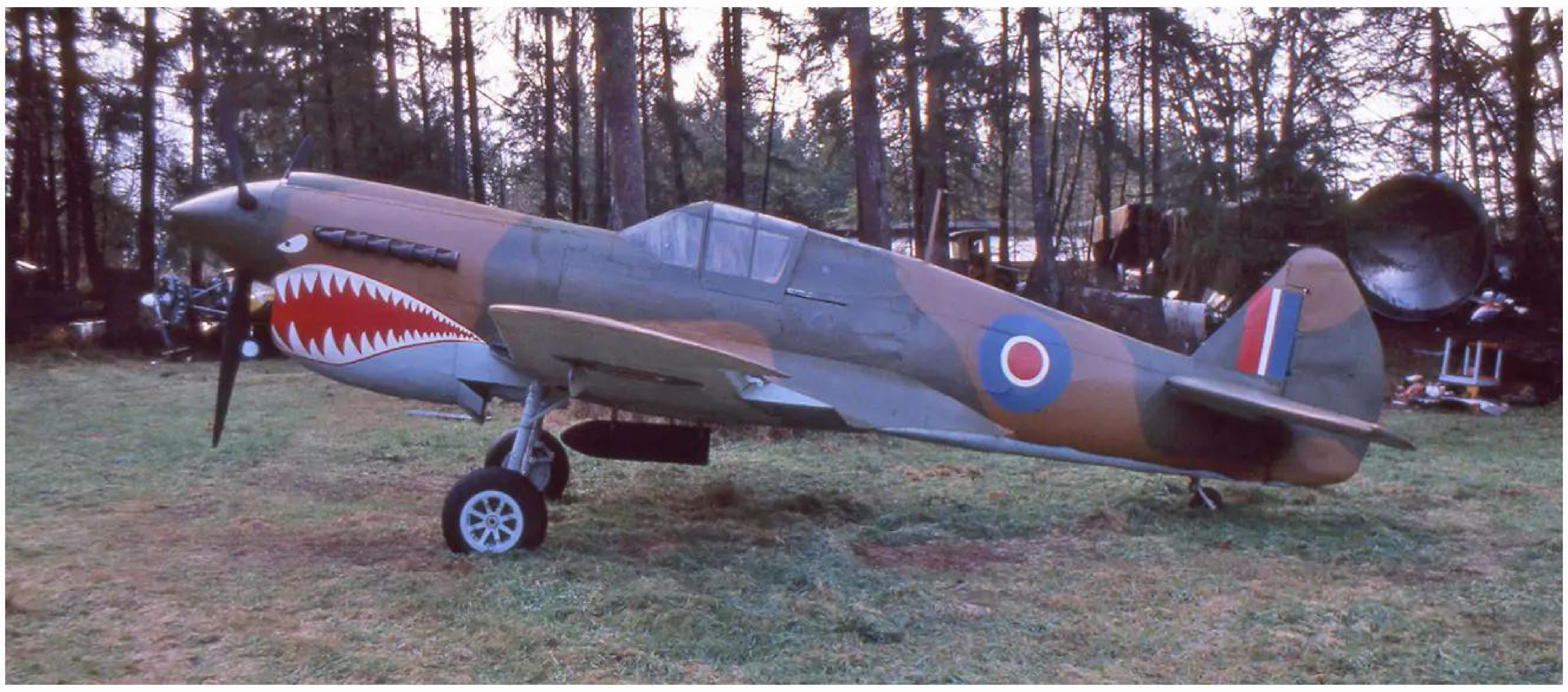
GRANGER TAYLOR'S KITTYHAWK



Granger Taylor's "P-40" parked on his farm.



With a burst of smoke, the Allison comes alive with Granger in the cockpit.

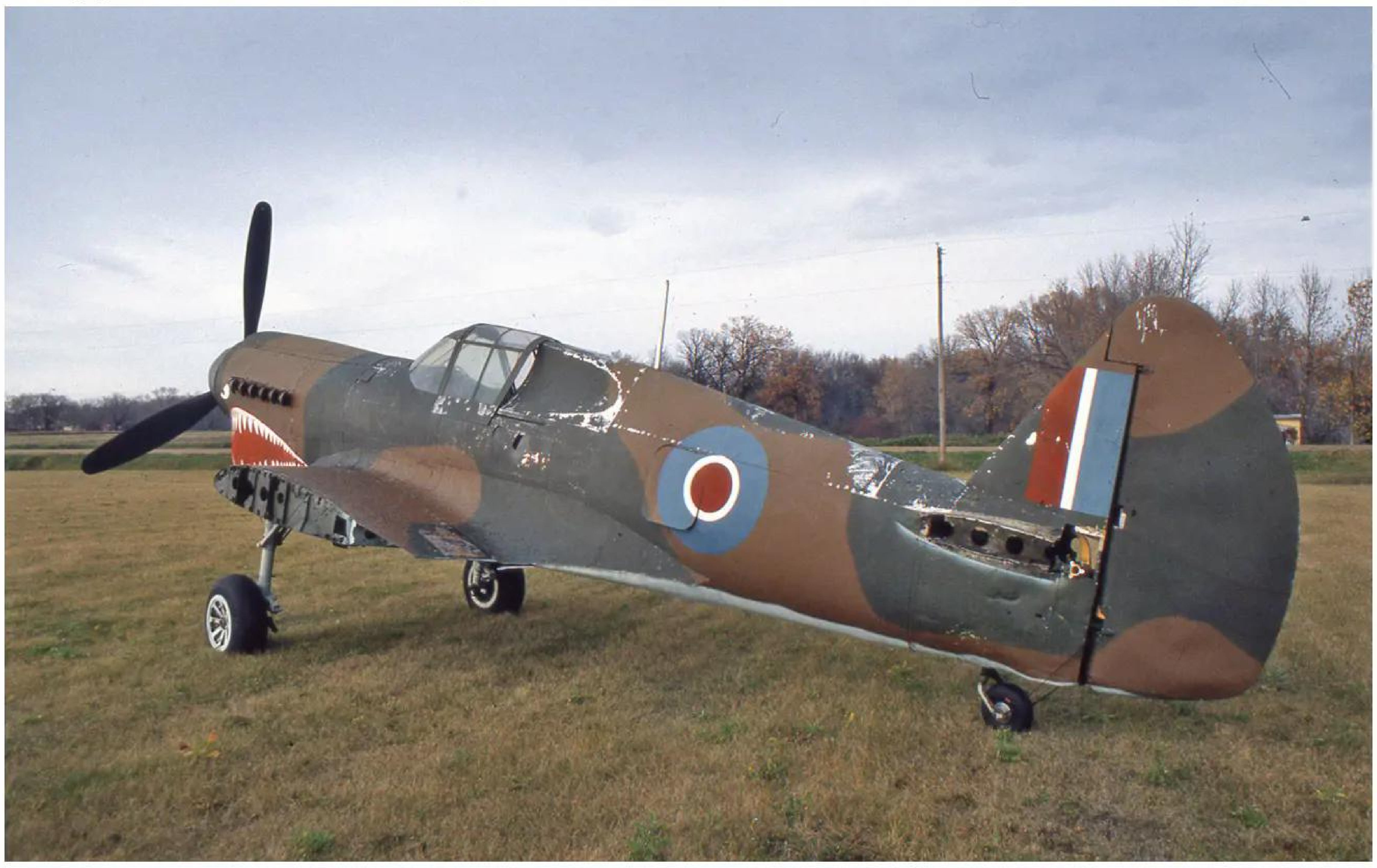


Side view of Granger's P-40 project.

You had a good write-up on the Granger Taylor/Bob Diemert "Curtiss P-40" but I decided to add some extra information from my four encounters with the aircraft. I visited it once at Granger Taylor's farm and on three later visits with my friend Norm Malayney to Bob Diemert's farm in Carman, Manitoba.

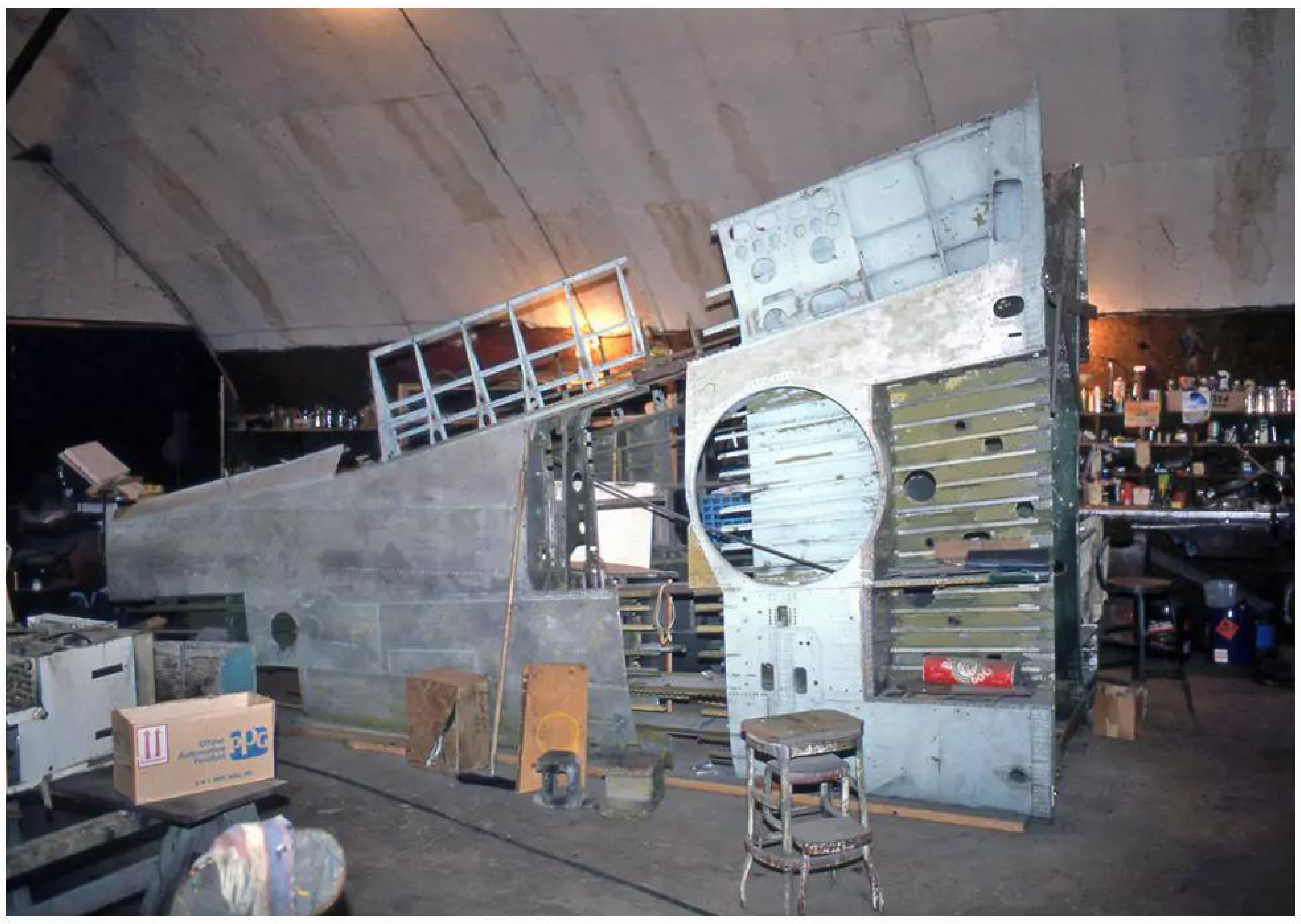
Our local Warbird legend, the late Jerry Janes, once showed me a photo of what Granger had found in the scrapyard. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy but what he had was basically a Kittyhawk cockpit section from firewall back to several feet aft of the wing, hacked off at the canopy rails, and with some portion of the inboard wing attached. He apparently also found part of a Bolingbroke rear fuselage which he incorporated in the "P-40" rebuild.

Long-time Kittyhawk owner George Maude told me that Granger's wing was constructed from pieces of P-40E and P-40N wing section. It has been suggested that the outboard wing pieces were from George's own P-40D/E (RCAF 1034), which had the wings cut off outboard of the landing gear to facilitate its move to George's farm on Saltspring Island. If so, it was the inboard piece(s) that came from a P-40N, which George said had come from a Mr. Chow who was a local man that had bought, dismantled, and scrapped four or five of the war surplus Kittyhawks that were disposed of by the government for $50 each. More on that angle later.

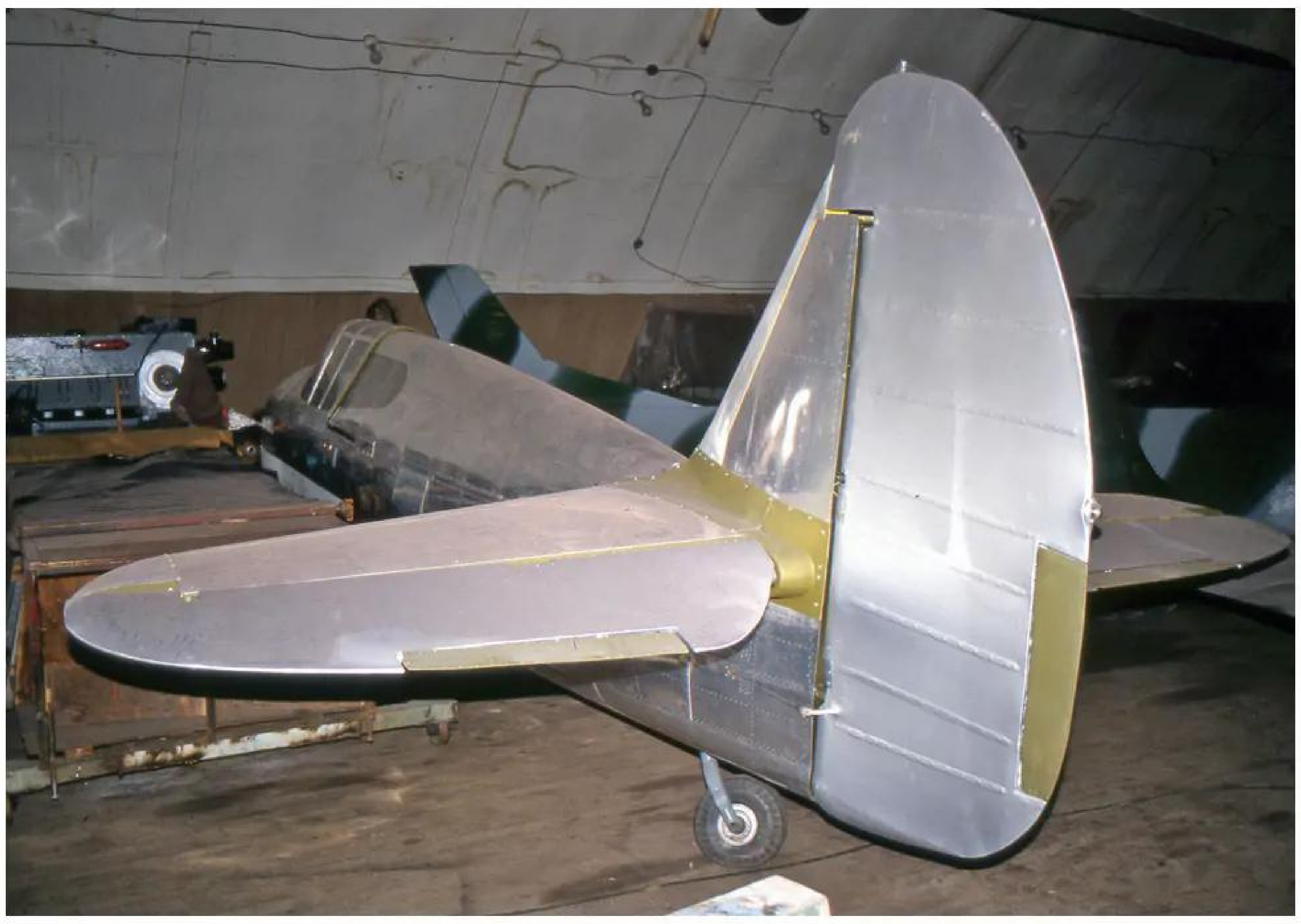


The aircraft, minus wings, after being acquired by Bob Diemert.

I understand that the nice cowl section came from the Rabeneck brothers in Nanaimo who had purchased a dismantled Kittyhawk to provide parts for their boat. Also, Kittyhawk owner and restorer John Paul



The "homemade" P-40 wing under construction in Diemert's shop.



This view shows the non-standard tail, probably off a Bristol Bolingbroke.

was involved in trading or selling some necessary parts to Granger. George Maude also said that the Allison V-1710 engine that Granger used had some internal damage but could be ground run. Granger did send me a shot of the engine being run.

When I visited the farm in the fall of 1979, Granger was not at home but he had told his parents to let me examine and photograph his aircraft. Besides the P-40, he had a derelict Republic Seabee and a wrecked Harvard that he had painted up like a Mitsubishi Zero. I identified the Harvard as having the Canadian civil registration CF-UAT and that is another mystery because CF-UAT is currently a beautiful and quite active Harvard flying out of Alberta. That aircraft did have some sort of accident at the Nanaimo, British Columbia, airport in 1969 so perhaps only a damaged wing with the registration on it is what a saw when visiting Granger. The Harvard was missing the canopy, tail feathers, etc. which appear to have been used in building his P-40 reproduction.

When Norm and I visited Bob Diemert in October 1982, the fuselage was standing outside on its gear with the outer portions of both wings removed. The P-40 has a one-piece

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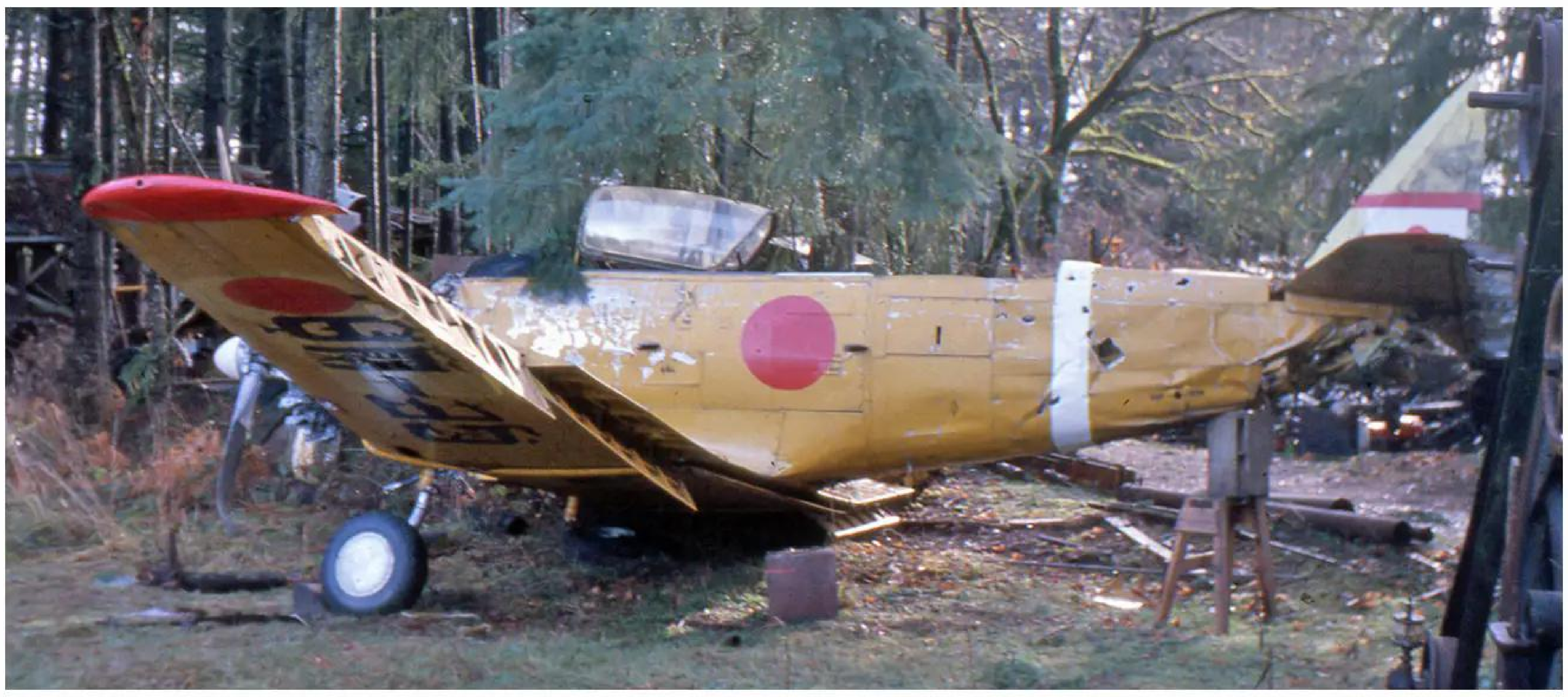
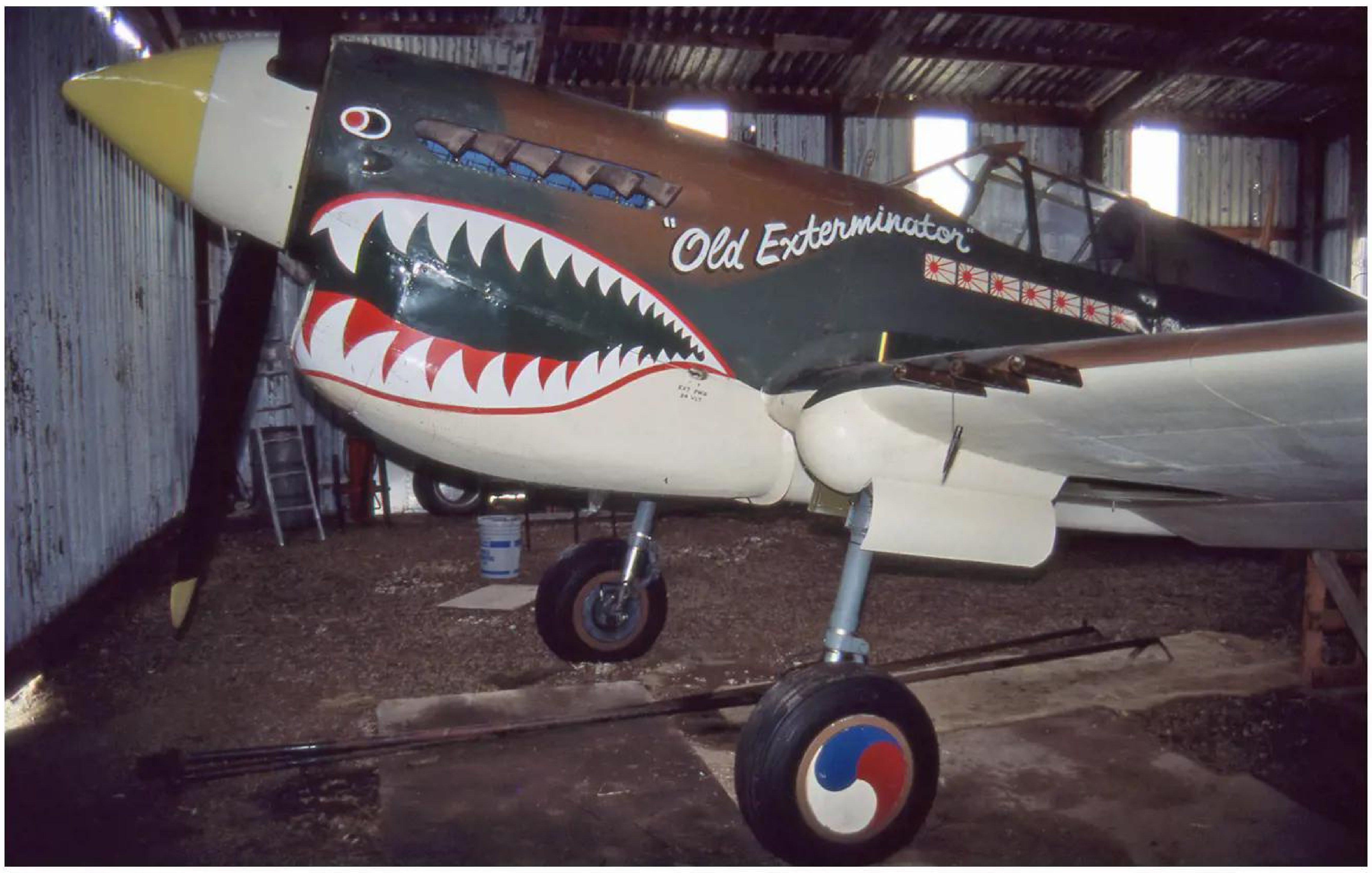


Granger Taylor's Harvard/Zero project.



The P-40 project nearing completion in Diemert's hangar.

wing (two half wings flanged together under the cockpit) and not a center section with outer panels like on a T-6/Harvard so there was a visible anomaly right there.

On our second visit in August 1986, the fuselage had been rebuilt but it appeared to me that the shape of the rear fuselage was not quite correct for a P-40. Bob was away but his little buddy Chris Ball was working on rebuilding the wings. Chris told me that Bob had purchased some new aluminum extrusions so the wing could be rebuilt but he was puzzled because the internal structure of the wing pieces did not match. I told him the wing was a mixture of P-40E/P-40N components and I don't know what he did to resolve that problem.

I always recall what Bob Diemert told me the first time we met. He stated that if an aircraft didn't have wings, he could build new wings. The new wings would be correct in shape and size but he said to not look inside since it would not be the same as a factory wing. Bob stated he built wings like he would build a wing for a model aircraft. That was certainly an interesting perspective.

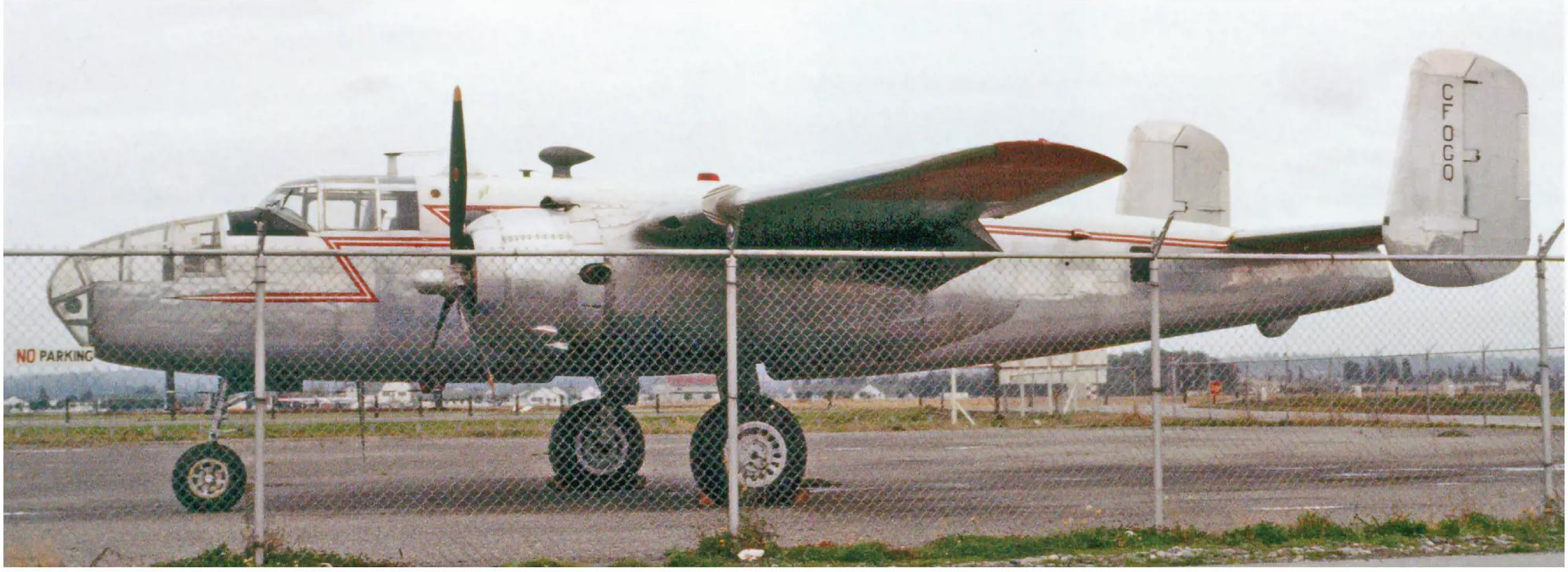
On the third and final visit in May 1996, the aircraft was completed and painted. You mentioned the engine and cowling. Bob had salvaged four single-stage Merlins and cowls from a derelict Avro York somewhere in Manitoba. So, the chin cowl looked like a Lancaster or York cowl, not one from a P-40. You might say that the result was a "sort-of" P-40F that the factory fitted with Merlins.

Diemert used another one of the Merlins from the York in his five-seat Mustang, which he told me caused a center of gravity problem because of the shorter and lighter single-stage engine. He probably used another of the Merlins in his Hawker Hurricane restoration.

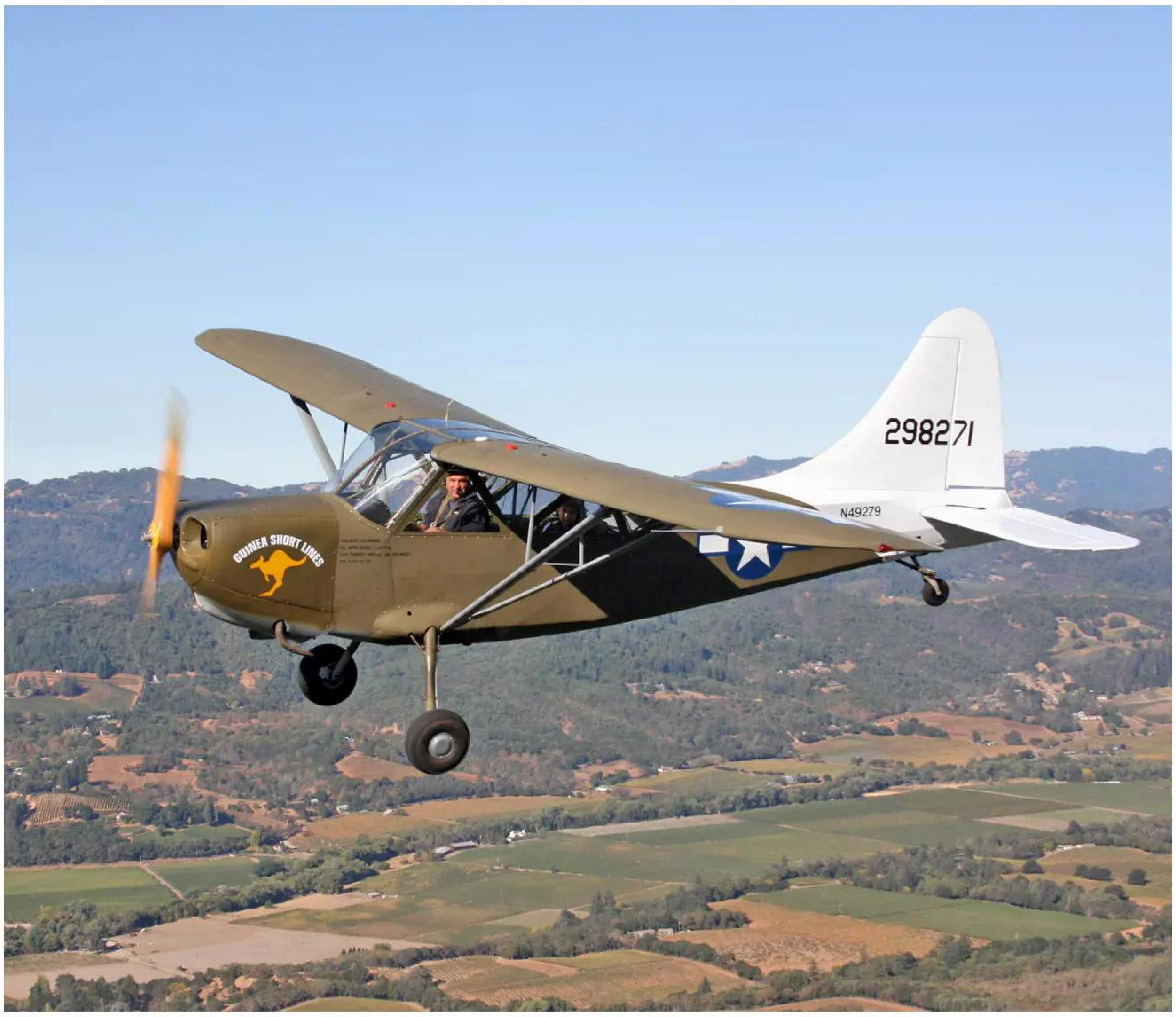
Jerry Vernon
Via email

DESTINATION TOKYO

I was surprised to see B-25D *Grumpy* in its new markings as *Destination Tokyo* in the January issue. *Grumpy* served in the Royal Canadian Air Force with its original Royal Air Force Lend-Lease serial of KL161 as you note. It was one of 70 Mitchells and 60 Liberators



Mitchell KL161 parked at Vancouver shortly after being sold surplus.



Steve Penning's restored L-5 N49279 painted in the markings of Guinea Short Lines.

used at Boundary Bay and Abbotsford, British Columbia, by No. 5 Operational Training Unit to train Liberator crews for the RCAF, RAF Coastal Command, and for RAF squadron in the India-Burma theater. The B-25s were utilized for training the basic flight crew on navigation, bombing, etc. exercises before flight engineers and air gunners joined the crew for the Liberator phase of the course.

When the OTU was expanded in 1944, the RCAF was offered brand-new B-25Js but rejected them in favor of 17 used and a dozen overhauled B-25Ds to match what they already had, due to difference in systems, cockpit layouts, etc. As you also note, KL161 was one of a dozen B-25D-30-NA Mitchells operated out of La Junta, Colorado, by the USAAF.

Following VJ-Day, No. 5 OTU closed down but several of the wartime Mitchells, including KL161 and KL149 (*Yankee Warrior/Rosie's Reply*) carried on in post-war RCAF service until the early 1960s.

KL161 was purchased in early 1962 by Joe Goldney, who was a Canadian Pacific Airlines maintenance man at Vancouver and he also tended to the needs of several old Republic Seabees that were tied down at Vancouver. It was registered CF-OGQ and I photographed it at Vancouver on 30 September 1962 when it was still wearing most of its RCAF paint.

Jerry Vernon
Via email

CLEVENGER STINSONS

I bought a Clevenger L-5 back in 1992/1993. It was a mess. The 220-hp Continental was gone, but the engine mount, Luscombe lower wings, and duster tank were still with the airframe. Lots of mods done to the old bird. I put it back all original and flew it for a few years and the L-5 is a great little

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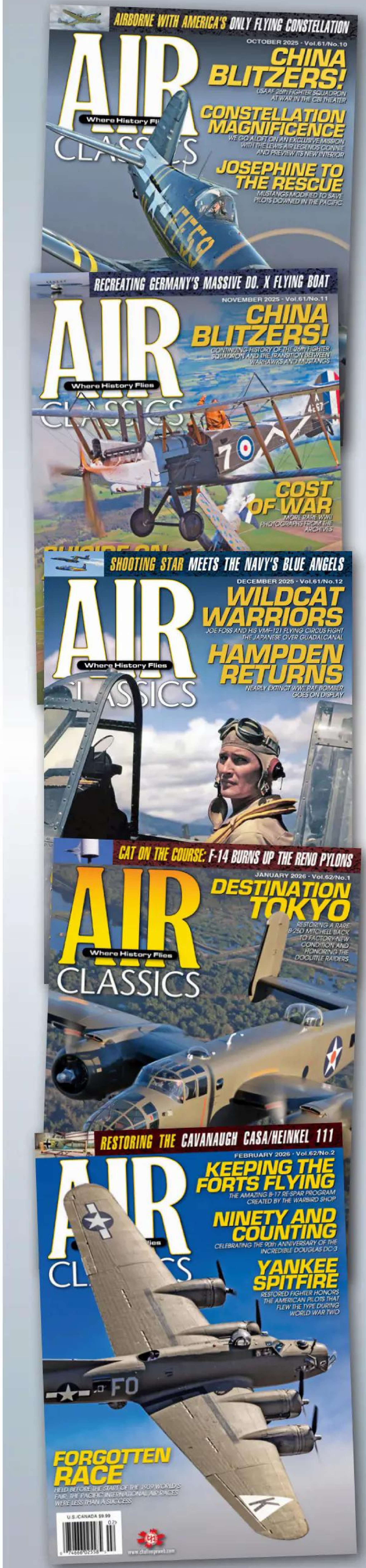
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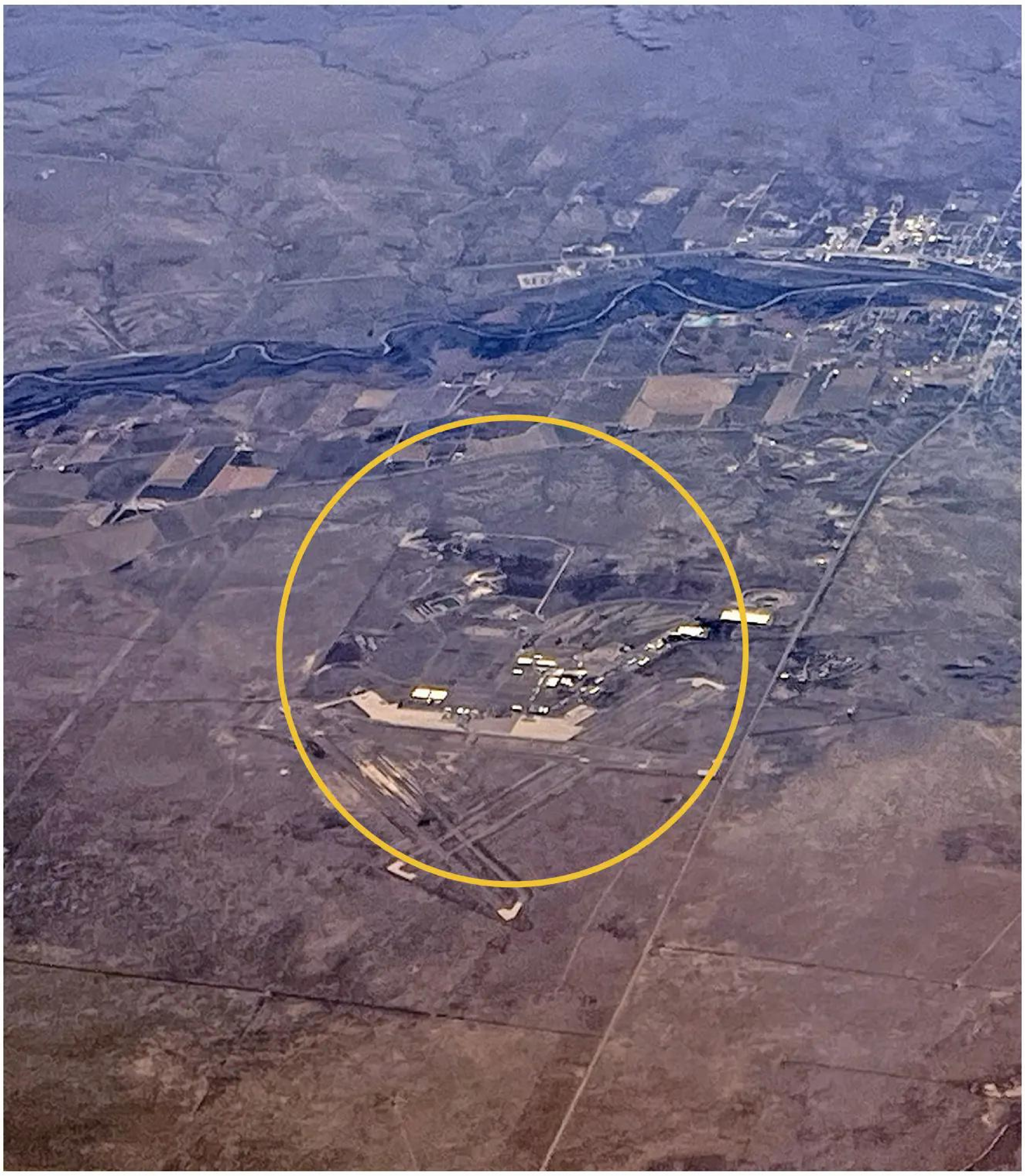

Aerial view of La Junta as it is today.

airplane. It was a fun project — cutting the fiberglass hopper out of the fuselage was interesting since it was built right into the aircraft. You could not remove the unit without cutting it up. I blasted the frame, painted everything, but it still smelled like malathion! The Luscombe wings were so badly corroded that they went onto the scrap heap. I sold the L-5 to Allen Bond in Arizona (his brother Daryl had a TF-51D). It then went to Texas but I lost track of the plane.

Steve Penning
Via email

LA JUNTA AAFB

The mention of La Junta, Colorado, in the article “Destination Tokyo” made me realize that this is another forgotten WWII airbase. La Junta is located in a really remote area of the state and I have attached a recent photo I took of the field while flying over at 38,000-feet. It would probably be worthwhile to explore this old base.

Mark Bingham
Via email

FORTRESS RE-SPAR

Thank you Scott Thompson for the comprehensive explanation in the February *Air Classics* of the complex B-17 wing spar attach problem the owners have faced over the years with the subsequent FAA issuance of ADs. Many of us have wondered in the intervening years what the real issues were that caused this serious problem for the aircraft’s owners/operators. Now the complicated issue is easier to understand. Thank goodness there are enough dedicated folks who are proceeding with corrections in order to keep these historic planes flying for all to appreciate.

Lou Antonacci
Algonquin, IL

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